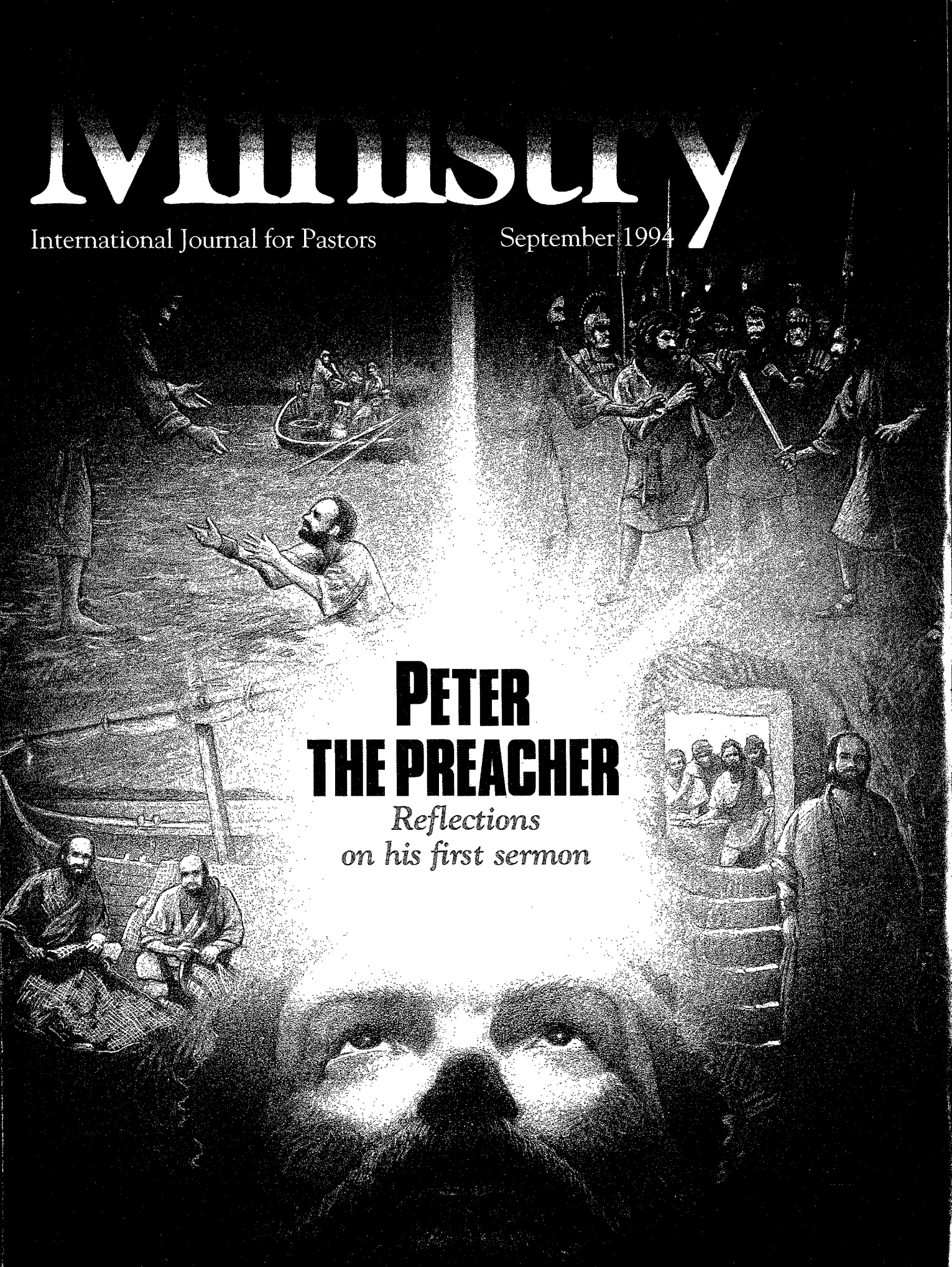


# Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

September 1994



## PETER THE PREACHER

*Reflections  
on his first sermon*

## Can pastors keep the Sabbath?

David Newman asks, "Can pastors keep the Sabbath?" (March 1994). The Sabbath is a day off work and a day of rest dedicated to God (Ex. 20:10).

That does not work for ministers. Ideally, the minister must worship with the same attitudes and feelings as everyone else, finding rest, recreation, and renewal in hearing God's Word, singing God's praises, and praying. In reality, however, leading a worship service and preaching involves a lot of work and tension. In addition, people want to see the pastor before or after worship to share their concerns. Caring for people in this way is not onerous, but it involves considerable attention and time. Some pastors avoid such meetings on Sabbath, but often that's the only time people can meet their pastor. Then there are such meetings as a worship committee. These hardly constitute frivolous entertainment, yet cannot be classified as paid work. Result: more work for the minister on the Sabbath!

I write this on my "take it easy day" of the week. On this day I schedule no appointments. This morning I did conduct a funeral, but such events wait for no one. If my wife were not out at work I might relax with her, but in her absence I catch up on things that need catching up with. A change of pace just about does for me what a more intentional rest might do.

I take a more complete break on Sabbath, when my wife is also at home and when I am not conducting worship. My conscience concerning work and my duty to my physical and mental well-being are satisfied. Other people may need to put in more or fewer hours, depending on their circumstances.

That fulfills a human need. But what about the God-ward side of the

Sabbath? I enjoy the occasional opportunity to sit in a worship service in which I have no leadership responsibility, but that does not mean I lack spiritual rest when I am normally involved in the leadership of worship. Each of us in our own way has to develop our relationship with God. Each of us has to decide our own level of time off from work that we want or need.

—Richard Lawton, Norwood, South Australia.

■ What made the place of the burning bush holy? What made Jerusalem the Holy City? What made the inner sanctuary of the sanctuary the Holy of Holies? What makes the Sabbath a holy day? The presence of God. If God is not present with you on that day, in a special way, it is only the seventh day of the week. But if He is, it's the Sabbath—blessed and made holy by His presence.

Isn't that exactly what Genesis 2:3 indicates? God's rest was a positive rather than a negative activity. He blessed and made holy that day because He wanted to develop a relationship with Adam and Eve. That's what the Sabbath is about. It's about quality time with God, without the veil of work between.

The Sabbath is for building a relationship with God, and I do not find that incompatible with my ministry as a pastor. The Sabbath and I are God's instruments to facilitate this relationship. As a pastor I endeavor to model Sabbathkeeping to my congregation. As a general rule I avoid all meetings on the Sabbath day other than those for worship, growth in Christ, or Christian fellowship. In our pressure-cooker society the fewer meetings we have on the Sabbath, the better. We, our families, and our churches are better for it. If Sabbath is consumed in ministering to the needs of others, as Jesus' often was, I

get my physical rest on another day of the week. But there can be only one Sabbath day for me—the day when I, the Lord, and His family spend quality time together without the distractions of the workaday week.—R. E. Way, Beach Haven, Auckland, New Zealand.

■ In nearly 40 years of ministry I have never been confused about making a distinction about the day as I go about my work. What I do on Sabbath may be identical to what I do on other days of the week, but I know what God expects from me on Sabbath.

This continual "Remember the Sabbath" attitude is reflected to my family, my church members, and others. Even though "Daddy" was busy on Sabbath, my children knew that it was a special day, different from any other day. I never had one of my children question me about my work on the Sabbath.

Yes, I wish I could have spent more time on the Sabbath with my children and family. But the two hours' drive to church and back on the Sabbath was quite fulfilling to us as a family.

I am concerned about the current secularization of the Sabbath, not only in activity but in attitude. Just invoking God's blessing does not legitimize an activity for the Sabbath. Some go to their usual place of labor on the Sabbath and excuse their activity by studying the Sabbath school lesson during coffee break. Others think that since Sabbath is a happy day, any activity that makes one happy on the Sabbath is quite legitimate. Such concepts pervert the intent of a holy and happy Sabbath.

We need to guard against being guilty of making a breach in the very law that we were raised to repair. —Gordon Smedley, Chilliwack, British Columbia.

If you're receiving MINISTRY bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 MINISTRY has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but we believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help to you too. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead.

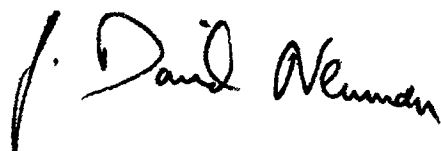
**Ministry** associate editor, **John Fowler**, continues our series on expository preaching with a stirring article on how to make Jesus the center of your sermon. "Peter the preacher" will inspire and instruct in your sermon preparation.

**Robert Folkenberg**, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, continues the same theme in his "Needed: gospel preaching." Folkenberg stresses that while Adventists have a distinct part to play in the preaching of the gospel, the gospel they present is the same gospel "from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Paul, and from the apostles to the second coming of Jesus." Folkenberg emphasizes that salvation is by grace alone with no ifs or buts.

**Marybeth Gessele** and **Glen Holland** contribute two short articles on how to set up women's ministries and begin a church newsletter. They share examples of the practical benefits these activities will bring to the local church.

"**How mature: How involved?**" reports on the fifth year of a 10-year study of Adventist young people in North America with particular reference to their faith and all its implications.

As always, we pray that the articles and ideas presented in this journal will enrich your ministry, feed your soul, and help you to win lost people for Christ.



Cover Illustration: Art Landerman

*Ministry* is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association.

ASSOCIATION SECRETARY:  
James A. Cress

EDITOR: J. David Newman

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:  
John M. Fowler, Martin Weber

SPECIAL ASSISTANT EDITORS:  
Nancy Canwell  
Miguel Angel Cerna  
Eric C. Ward

EDITOR EMERITUS:  
J. Robert Spangler

SEMINAR DIRECTOR:  
Rex D. Edwards

PASTORAL ADVISORY:  
Charles Ferguson  
Dennis Fortin  
Desmond Francis  
Robert Lloyd  
Larry Moore  
Dwight Nelson  
Eric C. Ward  
Walton Williams

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT:  
Ella Rydzewski

EDITORIAL SECRETARY:  
Dorothea Tone

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:  
Galen Bosley  
Sharon Cress  
Joel Sarli  
James Zachary

CONSULTING EDITORS:  
Ellen Bresee  
Floyd Bresee  
Gerard Damsteegt  
Raoul Dederen  
Robert Folkenberg  
Roland R. Hegstad  
Karen Holford  
Herbert Kiesler  
Alfred C. McClure  
Leo Ranzolin  
George W. Reid  
Angel Rodriguez  
Ariel Roth  
William H. Shea  
Russell L. Staples  
Richard Tibbits

INTERNATIONAL EDITORS:  
Walton Whaley, Africa-Indian Ocean  
22 Boite Postale 1764  
Abidjan 22, Côte d'Ivoire, W. Africa  
Joel Musvosvi, Eastern Africa  
P.O. Box H.G. 100,  
Highlands, Harare  
Zimbabwe, Africa

Johannes Mager, Euro-Africa  
P.O. Box 219, CH 3000  
Berne 32, Switzerland  
Heikki Silvet, Euro-Asia  
Isakovskogo St. #4, Korpus 1,  
Strogino  
123181 Moscow, Russia  
George Johnson, Far Eastern  
800 Thomson Road  
Singapore 1129, Rep. of Singapore  
Jaime Castrejón, Inter-America  
P.O. Box 140760  
Miami, FL 33114-0760  
William C. Scales, Jr., North America  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904  
Alejandro Bullón, South America  
Caixa Postal 12-2600  
70279 Brasília, DF, Brazil  
Gerhard Pfandl, South Pacific  
148 Fox Valley Road  
Wahroonga, N.S.W. 2076, Australia  
P. V. Jesudas, Southern Asia  
SDA Complex, Post Box 2, HCF  
Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India 635110  
A. David C. Currie, Trans-European  
119 St. Peter's Street  
St. Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, U.K.

COVER DESIGN: Trent Truman

LAYOUT: Ann Taylor

MARKETING: Mark Thomas

ADVERTISING SALES: Melynie Tooley

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES: Larry Burnnett

*Ministry*, (ISSN 0026-5314), the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 1994, is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and printed by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740, U.S.A. Subscriptions: US\$22.00 for 12 issues worldwide, air mail US\$39.85. Single copy US\$2.25. Member Associated Church Press. Second-class postage paid at Hagerstown, MD. This publication is available in microfilm from University Microfilms International. Call toll-free 1-800-521-3044. Or mail inquiry to: University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Editorial Office: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Stamped, self-addressed envelope should accompany unsolicited manuscripts. Office telephone: 301-680-6510.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Ministry*, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740.

**Volume 67    Number 9**

- 2    Letters**
- 4    First love**  
Nancy Canwell
- 5    Negotiating with the law**  
Martin Weber
- 6    Peter the preacher**  
John M. Fowler
- 10   Needed: gospel preaching**  
Robert S. Folkenberg
- 12   How to start women's ministries in your church**  
Marybeth Gessele
- 14   The church newsletter**  
Glen Holland
- 16   How mature? How involved?**  
Roger L. Dudley
- 20   Changes at the Watchtower**  
Edward Eugene Ross
- 22   Judging without being judgmental**  
Larre Kostenko
- 24   Family evangelism in Mexico**  
Adly Campos
- 26   The fine art of pastoral visitation**  
James A. Cress
- 28   Biblio File**
- 31   Shop Talk**



# First love

Nancy Canwell

**T**he boxes have been neatly stacked in our guest room for five months now. I've put their contents away, but I don't know where to place them in a house that's already set up. The boxes are full of books, file folders, sermons, devotionals, pictures, thank-you cards—memories of my past seven and a half years of pastoring. I've taken an extended leave of absence to be a full-time mother. So what do you do with "an office in boxes"?

Well, one thing I do is go through their contents. When I take occasional speaking appointments or wonder what I did with a certain book or paper, off come the lids, and I go searching! But twice I've done something else with their contents, which hold much of the past few years of my life. I smile at some of my first sermon titles, affectionately study photos of my youth group, read a letter of appreciation with warm feelings, or hold a gift from a group of women to whom I've presented a seminar.

Such rich memories. They take me back to when I received my call to be a pastor. It had been a long road for me, but finally, eight years after graduating with a B.A. in theology, I obtained a full-time position. Maybe it was because I had to wait so long. Maybe it was because full-time pastoral positions are hard to come by for women. Maybe it was because it had been my dream since I was 10 years old. Whatever the case, I remember well my strong "first love" experience as a new pastor.

On my first day of work a man

called our house asking to speak to the pastor. I started to say I would call my husband when he replied, "I want to talk to the *woman* pastor." *That's me*, I thought. "*I'm a pastor.*"

I was thrilled to go to work each morning. Every day seemed to bring a new challenge—a new dependence on the Lord for wisdom. My pastor-husband used to chuckle at me because I was actually excited about attending workers' meetings! I even remember once going to work when I was ill with the flu because I didn't want to miss a single day!

Do you remember some of those first-love feelings when you began your ministry? If you're like me, you've discovered that your first-love feelings for the ministry are only as good as your first-love feelings for God.

I'll never forget what it was like, at the age of 10, to give my life to God along with my entire family. First love was definitely there. We children had such simple faith in God. My father, who had led our family to God, taught us about prayer—that we could talk to Jesus about anything. I remember praying for our dying cherry tree, and it bloomed again. Another memory is that of my little brother, then 4, kneeling in front of a gum-ball machine at the grocery store and praying out loud that a prize would come out instead of gum. As other children gathered around him, they watched in amazement when a prize came out three times in a row! God honored our childlike faith.

As a new Christian, my dad had

promised God that he would gather his family together for worship every night. We must have been very busy one evening, because we forgot worship and went to bed. Then Dad remembered—at 2:30 a.m.! He awakened Mom and they built a fire in the fireplace and made hot chocolate. Then they came and gently awakened my siblings and me for family worship. I remember the love in our family room warming us like the heat of the fire.

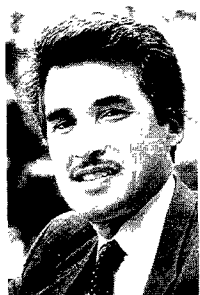
On camping trips we would go to different campsites and invite other campers to join us for worship as we sang religious songs around the campfire. Prayer and Bible study were like a hobby—we couldn't get enough of it.

Whether you were raised in a Christian home or experienced a conversion later in life, you can probably look back to one point in your life when you gave yourself to God. Maybe it was through a Week of Prayer, evangelistic meetings, a friend, or studying on your own. Do you remember those first-love feelings, too?

## Losing first love

I think it's important that we *do* remember. That we don't forget where we came from in our conversion experience or call to the ministry, because as I stated before, they go hand in hand. As pastors when our prayers become quick and trite, when we study our Bible only for preparing sermons that feed another's soul, we begin to lose that first love—for God as well

(Continued on page 30)



# Negotiating with the law

Martin Weber

**R**ed and blue lights swirled in my rearview mirror. I pulled over, and the helmeted police officer strode up to my car. He welcomed me to his town and invited me to be his guest at city hall. On the designated day I appeared before a solemn, black-robed judge who demanded to know why I was speeding.

"Forgive me, Your Honor," I stammered. "You see, I work for the Lord, and sometimes I'm so eager to go where He wants me to go that I forget about earthly things like speed limits."

"Is that so?" he replied. Then his face broke out with a grin. "Well, if you're working for the Lord, we'll hold Him responsible for your ticket. No fine for you!"

Happy as a mouse escaped from a barnyard cat, I strode out past the frowning police officer, revved my engine, and resumed the King's business.

Please don't profit from my example; we can't always break the laws of the land and live happily ever after. The judge could set aside the law because it was *prescriptive* in nature. Traffic laws prescribe proper behavior and can be modified for mitigating circumstances (such as when a poor pastor needs mercy from a God-fearing judge).

God's laws, however, are primarily *descriptive*. Except as we will see, divine laws describe the way things are, have always been, and always will be. So instead of merely *prescribing* the way things *should* be, they *describe* the way things *are*—

eternal absolutes that never change and cannot be negotiated.

Consider the physical law of gravity. It doesn't prescribe how a falling object ought to behave; it describes inevitable reality. Suppose you were skydiving and thought it would be fun to float with the birds without using the parachute. So you tried to negotiate with the Lord about suspending His law of gravity in the same way that my favorite judge suspended the traffic law. Not a good idea. You'd better hurry up and yank the rip cord! God's laws never change—with two exceptions.

First, regarding miracles. Sometimes in His providence God alters the laws of His physical universe to save people or reveal Himself to them. Exhibit A would be Jesus walking on water. Christ even gave Peter a temporary dispensation from the laws of physics to enable him, however briefly, to do the impossible that dark night on the stormy Sea of Galilee.

The other example of changeable divine law is the Mosaic system of the old covenant. These ceremonial laws with their feast days and rituals could be altered because, like our traffic laws, they were prescriptive. They applied eternal principles to pre-Messianic Hebrew society. With the coming of Christ, however, "the former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless" (Heb. 7:18, NIV). The Lamb of God became the "surety of a better covenant" (verse 22).

In contrast to the temporary, prescriptive Mosaic rituals, the Ten Commandments are descriptive divine laws

that never can change. They describe God's consistently loving character, so if He tampered with them He would deny Himself as a God of love. And since the Ten Commandments cannot be modified, abolished, or temporarily suspended like traffic laws, the penalty for breaking them could not be swept aside. Either sinner or Saviour must die.

The Ten Commandments not only describe the character of God; they also describe the divine character implanted within faithful human hearts through the new birth. Filled with gratitude for God's gift of salvation, we love Him who first loved us. Such love "is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10). "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). If it was better for Jesus to die than to break God's law, then we also should prefer death to disobedience. During the persecution of earth's final global apostasy, a faithful remnant will "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

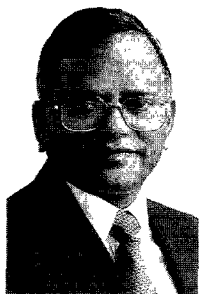
The test of genuine faith in Christ is whether our lives are drawn toward harmony with His law (see Rom. 3:31). Yet we never can trust in how well we succeed in keeping the law; our hope remains built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. None of us keeps God's law perfectly. We all fall short in many more ways than we can imagine, both in the bad things we do (sins of commission) and the good things we don't do enough of (sins of omission).

(Continued on page 30)

# Peter the preacher

**John M. Fowler**

**If Peter were to reflect on the road that led to his first sermon, what would he say?**



*John M. Fowler, Ed.D., is an associate editor of Ministry.*

**A**nyone who knew me as a boy could never have predicted that I would turn out to be a preacher. I had neither the manners nor the motivation for that kind of job. I grew up in the tough neighborhood of a fishing village. My life was as rough as the waves of Galilee. I caught fish. I smelt fish. I was uncouth, untidy. I often spoke first and thought later. I was given to protecting my turf. No one would ever have thought I would become a preacher. Least of all me.

Then one day Jesus of Nazareth met me. There was something about Him, something strange about His eyes. When He looked, it wasn't an ordinary look; it was so penetrating, almost surgical, cutting right through one's heart. That must have happened to me. When He said, "Simon, follow Me," I left my net and followed Him. Later I told my wife that I was going to be a fisher of men. She gave me a stern look as if to say that she and the kids ate fish and not people.

Even after I became His follower, I was not sure how my life would turn out. I did feel a particular closeness to Jesus. I listened to His teachings, grasped every word He uttered, watched with wonder His compassion for the poor, care for the suffering, tenderness toward the scattered debris of humanity, anger at hypocrisy, and an unrelenting pursuit after sinners. His miracles, His parables, His life, His love, impressed me beyond measure. But what was it that made my friends and me follow Him? Was it a selfless search for the kingdom that He had in mind? Or was it a

selfish pursuit of glory in the kingdom that we had in mind?

I wasn't quite sure. Life often plays a dangerous, twisted game. And I was no stranger to that game. Between self-supremacy and surrender, between center stage and servanthood, I wobbled every now and then. At one moment I confessed that Jesus is the Christ of God; at another when He needed me the most I denied ever knowing Him. I walked on water, but faith gave way to doubt, and the miracle was about to become a disaster, but for His saving grace. He shared with me Gethsemane—that moment when the fate of the universe hung in the balance, but I chose sleep. I did cut off an ear, but could not compose myself to face a maid's query regarding Jesus. I saw the cross. I rushed into the empty tomb. I was part of Him.

And yet, could I ever be a preacher of the kingdom? For days after He rose from death, He met with me and my friends and talked with us. Just before He ascended to His Father, He told us to wait—wait until we were ready to go and "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20).\*

And we waited. And suddenly on the day of Pentecost, when we were all together in one place (Acts 2:1), it happened. God's Spirit, "like the rush of a mighty wind" (verse 2), filled the house, and filled us all. With the coming of the Spirit, everything seemed to come together. All the years we

had spent with Jesus, all our questionings, the cross, the open tomb, took meaning. I remember Jesus once saying that "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

That's the first lesson I had to learn before becoming a preacher. Without the empowering of the Holy Spirit, no real preaching can take place. It is the Spirit's power that pushed me to the pulpit that day and helped me preach my first sermon. A preacher is born, not out of scholarship or eloquence or skill or wealth, but of the Spirit. A sermon is a miracle wrought by the Spirit through lips of clay.

Dr. Luke has left a careful record of my first sermon. He says that I was "standing with the eleven" (Acts 2:14) when I began the sermon. That's true. Gospel preaching is not a one-person show. It is not entertainment. It is not self-glorification. Preaching is an occasion when a representative of the body of Christ shares the good news of the kingdom. The sharing is done on behalf of that kingdom, by staying together with the people of the kingdom. Preaching fails when the body of Jesus is split. A preacher and the believer share the common platform of God's grace and His commission.

My sermon that day was not an ordinary incident. No sermon is. All my life seemed to have been a preparation for it, even though I may not have been consciously aware of it. The Holy Spirit enabled me to place my message in proper perspective and context. First, the perspective of God's Word. Nearly 50 percent of my sermon as it's recorded is quotations from the Bible. A sermon that does not spring from the Word of God cannot make the living Word come alive before the congregation. Without the inspired Word, how could we speak about the Incarnate Word? A sermon must begin with that understanding and be rooted firmly in God's revelation. It is that biblical perspective, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that led us to connect what was happening on that day to Joel's prophecy. "This is that," I thundered (verse 16, KJV). Preaching must be able to

connect the present with the past and then point to the future. The life of people today must be lived in the light of God's mighty workings of the past and His promises for the future. Once that connection is established, ministry takes on a new dimension: we become simple tools to be used by the Holy Spirit to change lives.

Second, the Spirit enabled us to preach within the context of an eschatological urgency. I was determined to point out that we were living in the last days, and it was no time to fool around. Preaching should always carry such an end-time urgency. Not that we should project an utopic vision or a frightening fiery scenario, but we need to present with prophetic anticipation that our hope in the kingdom is real, and that our Lord shall return soon to take us home. Authentic preaching is prophetic preaching—not so much fore-telling as forth-telling, fearless and bold, uplifting Christ, leading to a confession of sins and transformation of lives. Joel (2:28-32) came to my help, and I translated his emphasis on the end-time to urge "that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (see Acts 2:17-21).

Did you catch another important homiletic point here? Even as a sermon affirms the eschatological dimension of Christian living, it should not evade the compulsions of living in the present. It should speak of redemptive living now and here: for we must "call on the name of the Lord" and be saved.

What was my sermon that day? In one word, Jesus.

### **The human Jesus**

Jesus must be the decisive focus of every sermon. You may speak about doctrine or lifestyle or ethic or a parable or a miracle or a particular biblical passage. For sermon style you may choose narration, exposition, exegesis, or story. You may reflect on the personal expressions of the psalmist or the prophetic insight of Jeremiah or the apocalyptic thunder of John, but the decisive focus must always be Jesus—uplifting Him, praising Him, drawing your listeners to Him. Other-

wise what you say cannot really be a sermon.

On the day of Pentecost, I wanted my hearers to have no misunderstanding about my theme. I did not want them to think we were drunken babblers. I drew their attention to "this Jesus" (verses 23, 32, 36). Three times I used that phrase, to let them know that they are not through with Jesus yet. They may think they've gotten rid of Jesus on Calvary, but they're mistaken. Jesus is the eternal pursuer. He lives. He encounters individuals every day. He wants them to make a decision.

To make the meaning even more clear, I identified Him as Jesus of Nazareth. Christian preaching must let the historical Jesus confront the congregation as a real human person. This Jesus we worship and preach is not a mythological figure. He is not a fictional hero, created by a literary giant or a religious fanatic. He is a real historical person. He lived in Nazareth, taught in Galilee, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was crucified in Jerusalem. He walked with us, talked with us, ate with us, suffered with us, and was tempted like we are. Jesus is real. His divinity is real. His humanity is real. Without that reality to speak about, there is no Christianity, there is no Christian preaching. Jesus is the one through whom God invaded our human sphere in order that He may once for all deal with the problem of sin. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

When we speak of this Jesus, His humanity, His divinity, we speak of a great mystery; we stand on holy ground. Even we who saw Him in flesh and blood and were eyewitnesses to all that He was and all that He did could not quite understand everything about Him. He remains the eternal mystery. He is God.

### **The divine Jesus**

That's the second point I wanted my hearers to understand. Jesus was a man from Nazareth. We knew that. They knew that. But He was no ordi-



nary man. What He was and what He did were in "the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). The mission of Jesus was not a result of self-discovery or self-fulfillment. Great religious leaders have come upon history, self-discovered their role, and tried to lead their followers to some great social or moral Everest. Jesus is not one such great leader. He is not one such great teacher. Jesus is God, invading history in space and time, to execute the plan laid "from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8, KJV). You see, the people of Jerusalem, including the priests and the rabbis, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, thought they were dealing with a man—an inconvenient teacher, a miracle performer, an upright person, or a judgmental prophet whose life was a moral indictment on theirs. So they chose the cross and went home glad that the problem of Jesus was over. They could have been right, except Jesus was no ordinary man. He was God. "This Jesus you crucified, this Jesus God raised up," I cried over the airwaves of Jerusalem. The grave could not hold Him. He rose a mighty conqueror over sin, death, and Satan.

A sermon must have sound proof, and what proof did my assertion have? I had two proofs to offer. First, I went back to the Bible. There's no solid ground for any preaching unless it springs from, and keeps going back to, the Word. To Jews the cross was a symbol of shame. They argued that "a hanged man is accursed by God" (Deut. 21:23), and therefore the crucified Jesus could not be the Messiah. But I wanted my hearers to know that they had let their misconceptions shape and limit their God. Their self-conceit had blinded them from the purposes of God. If they had only put prejudice aside and let the Bible be the sole source of truth, they would have known that the cross was no accident; it was in "the definite plan [*boule*]" of God (Acts 2:23). The cross of Jesus is God's *boule*, the irrevocable, the unalterable answer to the problem of sin. The

prophetic word predicted not only the cross but also the resurrection. I drew their attention to prophets who foresaw a Messiah who not only would die, but also whose body would not see corruption. I referred them to David, who prophesied "the resurrection of the Christ" (verses 25-31; see Ps. 16:8-11).

Just as the people were drinking in this interpretation of the psalmist, I gave them my second proof that Jesus is of God: I was an eyewitness. Wherever I preached, I had that advantage of knowing Jesus personally. I could speak about my mother-in-law, the feeding of the 5,000, the man at the pool, the 10 lepers, Lazarus, my own betrayal, the kiss of Judas, and above all the cross. I could also speak about the Resurrection. I was the first disciple to witness it, even though the

to the Bible and said this is what David foretold: "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet" (Acts 2:34, 35; see Ps. 110:1). I showed from the Scripture how this prophecy applied to Jesus. People of Jerusalem thought they were doing away with Jesus, burying His person, His name, and His teachings forever in a sealed tomb. Pilate washed his hands off. The priests returned home, with the satisfaction of doing away with the One who troubled them the most. Judas the betrayer did not even wait to see what was going to happen. But this Jesus is no ordinary man. No grave could silence Him. No political power could do away with Him. No religious hierarchy can shut down the power of His presence. And so what happened to Jesus?

He rose to His Father's throne and sat on His right hand, with His enemies as footstools. Prophecy is full of symbolic pictures, and preachers ought to be cautious how they interpret these symbols. But I had no difficulty with these symbols. Neither should you. The enemy of Jesus is Satan. At the cross he was crushed, defeated, doomed. In the great cosmic conflict between good and evil, Jesus has become the ultimate victor, and He has rightfully occupied the position of power and authority at the right hand of the Father.

So what?

That, I suspected, would be the thought crossing the minds of my Jerusalem audience. So it was time to tell them what Jesus means: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

This was a critical point in my sermon. The thousands of people hearing me that morning had come from distant parts of the Roman Empire. They were preoccupied with two factors all their lives: a present reality and a future hope. The present reality was that they lived under the lordship of Caesar. Caesar was their lord of

## **Proclamation is not a theory of probability; it is the sharing of a certainty; it is an eyewitness account of what the Lord did and can do!**

faith of Mary Magdalene beat me to it. But that's the beauty of seeing Jesus: the fact, not the order, is important. When you are an eyewitness, you can speak with authority, and the Holy Spirit can convict your hearers. If you have not seen Jesus, if you have not touched Him, if you have not spoken to Him today, don't ever try to preach a sermon! During my preaching, not once did I say "It's possible . . .," "It's reasonable to suppose . . .," or "I have a hunch . . ." Proclamation is not a theory of probability; it is the sharing of a certainty; it is an eyewitness account of what the Lord did and can do!

### **The living Jesus**

I had another important burden to convey in my sermon. The risen Jesus ascended into the heavens from whence He came. Once again I turned



daily living: a vengeful, oppressive lord. The future hope was the coming Messiah, the Christ. I knew this, and I wanted to touch their inmost emotions and fears. I told them that "this Jesus whom you crucified, God has made Him both Lord and the Christ. He is your Lord: loving, caring, gracious Lord. He is your Messiah. He is your present reality. He is your future hope. This Jesus."

When you present Jesus in such penetrating terms, response is inevitable. People are "cut to the heart" (verse 37). A sermon, grounded in the inspired word, testifying to the cross and the Resurrection, and empowered by the Spirit, cannot but lead the hearers to ask, "What shall we do?" No sermon should end without someone asking that question. Preaching is not entertainment. It is not information doled out. It is not emceeing a service. It is talking about "this Jesus," leading the people to His cross, showing them His wounds, describing His triumph, offering them His hope, and inviting them to accept Him as their Lord and Saviour. A sermon that does not give its listeners an opportunity to respond to Jesus reflects either the preacher's timidity or his/her lack of confidence in the Holy Spirit's control of lives and events.

The issue of response is not one of legalistic compliance to this routine or that doctrine, to this institution or to that lifestyle. These may be important, but I wanted my congregation to understand clearly the one central issue on which their eternal destiny depends: "What shall we do with this Man Jesus?"

### **The eternal Jesus**

I remember clearly the eagerness with which my hearers asked that question. Only a few days earlier some of the same people shouted for His blood. They had cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Now they want to know what to do with this risen Jesus. A preacher must never give up hope in the people. Today someone in your congregation may reject your word; but tomorrow hope may let the Lord in. There is power in the blood of Jesus to convict, to convince, to trans-

form. All we have to do is follow the words of Jesus: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32).

That's all. We lift up Jesus, and He does the rest. On that day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave me the right words to make my final appeal: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:38, 39).

An effective sermon must lead to repentance, to a change of life. It

should bring the sinner to baptism in the name of Jesus. It should affirm the saint in the reception of the Holy Spirit. It should proclaim the universality of the gospel, to both Jew and Gentile, to those who are here and to those who are "far off," to all who call upon the Lord.

Are you surprised at the result we had? A baptism of 3,000 on the first day of our evangelistic campaign in Jerusalem! Where there is the Word, where there is the preaching of the cross and the Resurrection, and where there is the Spirit, church growth takes care of itself. Maranatha. ■

\* Except as stated, all Scripture passages are from the Revised Standard Version.

## **This Jesus: Peter's First Sermon**

### **Sermon Outline**

**Text:** Acts 2:14-41.

#### **Introduction:**

- Meeting Jesus
- Accepting Jesus
- Awaiting His empowerment (Acts 1:8)
- Becoming part of His people (Acts 2:14)
- Sensing the urgency of time (Acts 2:17-22)
- Proclaiming His word (Acts 2:14ff)

#### **The human Jesus**

- Jesus the fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 2:25-28)
- Jesus the Man of history (Acts 2:22)
- Jesus the arbiter of human destiny (Acts 2:42)

#### **The divine Jesus**

- "The definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23)
- This Jesus you crucified (Acts 2:23)
- "This Jesus God raised up" (Acts 2:24, 32)
- This Jesus of whom I am an eyewitness

#### **The living Jesus**

- Jesus who did not see corruption (Acts 2:27, 31)
- Jesus, seated on the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:25, 33)
- Jesus the ultimate victor (Acts 2:33-36)

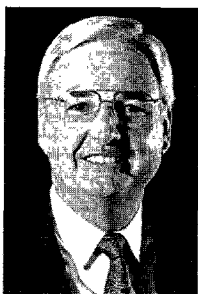
#### **Appeal**

- "What shall we do" with this Man Jesus? (Acts 2:37)
- Come to the eternal Jesus
- Come to the only way of salvation (Acts 2:38)
- Come and be a part of Jesus' family (Acts 2:41)

# Needed: gospel preaching

**Robert S.  
Folkenberg**

**The everlasting  
gospel of God's free  
grace is still the  
good news, the only  
news that counts.**



*Robert S. Folkenberg  
is the president of the  
General Conference  
of Seventh-day  
Adventists.*

**T**he Seventh-day Adventist Church needs biblical preaching now more than ever, and the focus must be on the gospel.

## **Why gospel preaching?**

Recently the General Conference completed the most thorough survey of Seventh-day Adventists ever attempted on a worldwide basis. More than 18,500 members drawn from almost every part of the globe were asked about their beliefs, practices, and convictions. The results provide us with invaluable information about the status and spiritual needs of our church.

The survey brought plenty of good news. By and large, our members show solid support for our fundamental beliefs. They understand well the plan of salvation—in *theory*. However, only a small percentage reports having assurance of eternal life. The assurance scale ranges from a high of 84 percent in one union conference to only 52 percent in one division. It seems evident that while many Seventh-day Adventists know the *doctrine* of the gospel, they have yet to *experience* it.

The gap between understanding salvation and experiencing its power can be closed only by gospel preaching that will bring every member into the calm, joyful confidence of salvation in Jesus.

We need gospel preaching for another reason as well: our proclamation to the world. Did you notice how the first angel's message sums up the work that the Lord has committed to us? "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the *everlasting gospel* to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and

kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6, KJV).\*

We do not have a new message to give to the world—something startling or sensational. It's the old, old story of Jesus and His love. God has always had just one way of salvation. Only by grace, only by His loving provision, only by His free gift—this is the good news. It's the same gospel from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Paul, and from the apostles to the second coming of Jesus.

We cannot assume that all of us know the gospel as a living experience. Every one of us may have heard it, but too many of us have not experienced it. We cannot assume that those who come to our evangelistic meetings know the gospel story. We must present it to them clearly and forcibly, seeking to make it real in terms of life in these times. We must point out the awful fact of sin, and their need for the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Ellen White writes: "Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy."<sup>1</sup>

It is tragic if people learn about the importance of the law at our evangelistic meetings but have to go down the street to a church of another denomination to learn about the assurance of salvation through Christ. The Lord has given this church a clear mandate: preach the everlasting gospel.

Somehow we have had a problem in carrying out this mandate. Even our pioneers, sincere Christians though they were, too often preferred argument and debate. They wanted to *prove* they were right and their opponents were wrong. Ellen White said their formal, set discourses were as dry as the hills of Gilboa.<sup>2</sup>

But into this desert came the soft rain of the message of righteousness by faith. At the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis, God used two young preachers, E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, to bring Seventh-day Adventists back to the everlasting gospel. Although some veteran leaders opposed the message, Ellen White endorsed it, and the church took a turn that influences us to this day, and from which we must not depart.

### Why are we reluctant?

The gospel is God's incredible good news. It's so unlike the way in which humans deal with one another that we find it difficult to accept just as it is. We seek to dilute it or distort it. Or, having accepted it, we fall back into a works mode, like the Galatians.

The world operates on this principle: You get what you earn. Nothing is really free. There's no free lunch.

If this were the way God dealt with us, no one would ever make it through to the eternal kingdom. For we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23),\* and "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).

But God doesn't deal with us like that! He treats us, not as we deserve, but as Christ deserves: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Ellen White comments: "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was con-

demned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed.'"<sup>3</sup>

Some Seventh-day Adventists think that preaching this good news just as it stands—without any ifs or buts—is dangerous. It makes salvation too easy, they say. It makes grace too cheap. They are afraid that people will be lulled into a false sense of security, and that careless behavior will result.

Thus, they tend to hedge or qualify the gospel. By one means or another they introduce human works into the equation so salvation no longer shines as God's totally free gift. And the hearers go away robbed of the assurance of salvation, left to wander in uncertainty, doubting and fearing.

It's time for change! Let's preach as the Lord has summoned us. Let's proclaim the everlasting gospel!

### Preach the biblical gospel

However, not every message that people call gospel is the biblical gospel, the everlasting gospel. Paul told the Galatian believers: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all" (Gal. 1:6, 7). The false gospel was adding human works—specifically, circumcision—to God's free gift of salvation (Gal. 3:1, 2; 5:2-6).

Note what the false gospel does. It makes place for human pride. It gives us some part in earning our salvation. It leads us to *presume* on God's gracious provision by willfully rationalizing our sinful conduct.

The same apostle Paul who so emphatically speaks against the false gospel and against adding our works to God's free provision also exhorts Christians to holy living. God provides freely; we accept gratefully. We do not spurn His offer, nor do we take it for granted. Grace is free, but it isn't cheap. Grace emptied heaven for us.

Paul's two great treatises on the gospel, Romans and Galatians, set out the implications of the gospel for daily

living. The apostle exhorts the Romans: "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Rom. 6:1, 2). "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace" (verses 12-14).

Likewise to the Galatians: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love." "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law." "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:13, 16-18, 24, 25).

When we preach the everlasting gospel as Paul preached it, we Seventh-day Adventists will find both assurance of salvation and power for victorious daily living. We will not go away feeling beaten down. We will walk from church with a spring in our steps, rejoicing in God's free gift. And we will not leave feeling that the gospel gives us license to live carelessly. We will seek to live victoriously by the power of the indwelling Spirit, as we try to honor our Lord in all that we do and say.

The everlasting gospel! It's still good news, the best news around, the only news that counts. May it resound from every Seventh-day Adventist pulpit from New Guinea to New Orleans and from Berlin to Buenos Aires! ■

\* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

(Continued on page 30)

# How to start women's ministries in your church

**Marybeth Gessele**

**It's more than women interacting with women; it's focusing on a vital dimension of church life and growth.**



*A pastor's wife, Marybeth Gessele writes from Gaston, Oregon. She is the author of No More Cinnamon Bear Cookies, a book on explaining death and dying to children.*

**W**hen women's ministries was first introduced, I was a bit distressed. Here was another program to sponsor, cajole, push, and make happen. As a pastor's wife, I felt I had enough to do with the multitude of duties required plus numerous other fill-ins on Sabbaths. Just keeping my own family fed, clothed, laundered, schooled, and living peaceably together was a feat in itself. I didn't know what women's ministries involved, and it didn't matter. I didn't like it anyway! It was something new, something needed by our churches, so I was told. It seemed to me like a fancy name for the altruism already active in our local church.

I skeptically read the material the conference sent, and even attended a meeting on how to organize a program. I had a difficult time getting interested, yet I could see some benefits in such a program. I kept telling myself it was my "duty" to be involved in this new thrust, but my enthusiasm was only a smiling facade.

H. W. Silvester once said joy comes not to the people who seek it for themselves but to those who seek it for others. That was it. I would become part of this new program for the sake of the women of my church. Or so I thought!

Soon I discovered that women's

ministries has functioned successfully in many churches. It has helped women reach out to one another in the church and community by sharing God's love. It has provided fellowship, spiritual growth, information, inspiration, and much more. I could see how it could be an encouraging tool for the women of the church. The men too could benefit indirectly. There's not a pastor around who would not appreciate a group of praying women, interested in the spiritual strength of the flock.

We barely digested the information, and our church board was urged to select a women's ministries coordinator. The board members were not even sure of the reason for the new position, but they dutifully performed their task.

The weeks that followed were difficult for me. On the one hand I found committee meetings irritating; on the other, I always came home excited about the plans we were making. I felt frustrated defending women's ministries as not being a women's lib group. Some women were enthusiastic about what such an organization could do for them; others wondered why women needed such exclusive attention: couldn't we do things as families, like in the good old days?

Our churches have women who need each other: single mothers,

divorcées, widows, and women whose husbands are not church members. They come to church hurting, empty, lonely, and stressed. They smile graciously and try to pretend things are fine, but their insides are riddled with anguish. Women's ministries could meet the needs of these women.

In our church, even before women's ministries was evolved, we were having annual retreats for women. At one time, as part of the planning process for a retreat, we conducted a survey on the most pressing needs of women in our church. What do you think was the greatest need of the women in our congregation? Friendship. From this one area we have endeavored to fan out, providing a variety of activities for women of all ages. The idea is simple: for people to become friends, they need to get to know each other. Providing opportunities for togetherness fosters friendship. Friendship creates interest; interest brings about concern. Before long, caring, meaningful friendships are formed. Spiritual nurturing is assured. Isn't that the whole objective of women's ministries?

If you have an active women's ministries in your church, good for you. If you don't, here are some pointers that may help.

**Pray.** Get a few interested women and pray together. Ask the Lord to direct you. He will give you ideas. He will show you whom to contact. Prayer time can be a real bonding factor and the key to success.

**Select a coordinator.** Unless your church is quite small, it usually works best if someone other than the pastor's wife leads the women's ministries. Someone who knows the women well, someone with whom women can identify easily, someone who can give leadership. A woman pastor or pastor's wife can be a sponsor. Members given ownership are responsibly involved. Discuss the coordinator choice with your initial prayer group and present

it to the church board for approval. Let the church board also appoint a women's ministries committee with three to five members.

**Expect small beginnings.** Anything new takes time. Don't expect a huge turnout at your first activity or any of your activities, for that matter. Be grateful for a few. You may want to plan an early-morning walk, organize a Sunday breakfast together, provide an opportunity to share favorite Bible verses, and pray for each other.

**Encourage variety in your program.** Not everyone is interested in everything; so the more varied your program is, the more interesting it

not have come.

**Build on what you have.** Churches have personalities as different as people. What works in one church may not work in another. Use your imagination and fit your women's ministries to the temperament and resources of your church.

**Finances.** Not all churches can afford to finance women's ministries. But don't let the lack of money stand in the way. In our church, women's ministries had to be totally self-sufficient. Our retreat costs are spread among those who attend. Other activities (like the teas) are funded by well-wishers or by nominal admission. Meals are usually potluck. There are dozens of things that can be done without finance.

#### **Remember your focus.**

The whole purpose of women's ministries is not to plan activities for activities' sake, but to plan with spiritual ministry in mind. Many are the women who are hurting, lonely, and discouraged. Women's ministries can provide them encouragement and

a reason to go on. Just having a core group of people who care and who are praying for each other is ministry in itself. God would have us bear one another's burdens. That's what the church is all about.

Do I still think women's ministries is just a fancy name for something already happening in our church? Yes and no! Yes, it is a name for women interacting with women, but now with a definite goal in mind. No, it involves far more than a name. It has given the women of our church a chance to focus on a vital part of church growth—keeping what we already have. And making it stronger. I personally have been blessed by the unity I see happening on purpose rather than by chance. Getting involved for others as a duty has resulted in immeasurable blessings in my own behalf. Try it in your church. Women's ministries is for real. ■

---

## **Just having a core group of people who care and who are praying for each other is ministry in itself. God would have us bear one another's burdens.**

---

will be. Our church group recently did something that doesn't sound like women's ministries at all! We decided to have a little girls' tea (herb tea, of course). We thought it would be fun for the kindergarten and primary girls of our church to have their own tea party. We sent out personal invitations asking them to come, complete with party dresses and dolls or teddy bears. Their mothers were invited too. Talk about excitement! For an hour on Sunday afternoon the little girls were given full attention. Our women's ministries coordinator explained that tea parties were a chance to practice manners and proceeded to review basic courtesy. She reminded them that good manners includes being kind. The bottom line of this whole activity was to let the little people know that their church considers them very special. It also brought mothers who otherwise might

# The church newsletter

**Glen Holland**

## Powerful and practical for small multichurch pastorates

**I** know how to increase attendance at our meetings," declared the chairman of the local ministerial association. "Just notify everyone a day or two beforehand. Now, who's willing to do that?"

Several awkward moments followed as the pastors exchanged glances. Then the reluctant alibis tumbled out. Those with larger churches insisted that their workload was already full, while pastors of smaller churches suggested that a larger church's secretary could do the job. Finally the Catholic priest offered to ask his secretary to help us.

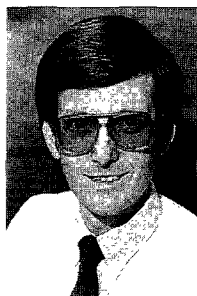
I discovered I was not alone in my distaste for extra office work. The demands are already too great to waste with unnecessary assignments. But there is one office project I no longer consider a luxury in my sprawling two-church district: the church newsletter. The benefits of this monthly outreach to my members and guests have been surprising and gratifying.

### Missing members return

Malcolm Gordon, president of the

Southern Union Conference (southeastern U.S.), remarked at a ministers' meeting: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." A monthly newsletter to missing members regularly reminds them that their church cares about them. Several formerly inactive families in my current district testify that our newsletter, *The Adventizer*, enticed them to involve themselves in church life again.

I used to bulk-mail our newsletters. Then I realized that here in the United States the savings are not significant if at least half the members on a mailing list of 200 or less are active, since they can pick up their newsletter at church services. Postage not spent on active members enables a first-class mailing to the inactive. This makes the newsletter seem more personal to them. Better yet, some cost-conscious members save postage altogether by delivering prelabeled newsletters right to the homes of missing members. A knock on the door from a caring member may be more important than the newsletter. If the newsletters are mailed first-class,



*Glen Holland is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in New London, North Carolina.*

## Cost Comparisons

### Bulk Mail vs. First-Class Postage (U.S.A.)

Bulk Mail (200 pieces) (Note: Costs below do not reflect an additional \$75 set-up fee for first year only.)	First-Class Mail
Nonprofit rate: $11.3¢ \times 200$ (minimum bulk quantity) = \$22.60  Plus annual bulk permit: \$6.25 ( $\$75 \div 12 \text{ months} = \$6.25$ )	100 copies picked up at church: No postage cost  100 copies mailed at 29¢ ea.
<b>Total Cost/ Month: \$28.85</b>	<b>Total Cost/ Month: \$29.00</b>

personal notes and the weekly bulletin can be included, which isn't legally possible in the U.S. with bulk mail. Any such personalization with the newsletter provides one more opportunity for "high touch" in a "high tech" world. (See cost comparison chart.)

Thinking about inactive members and costs reminds me about a finance committee meeting at one of my churches. We were seeking ways to trim the budget, and I suggested that the newsletter wasn't absolutely essential. We could save nearly \$40 a month by eliminating it. No, the others protested. They pointed out that several previously inactive families had become contributors over the past two years through receiving the newsletter. So *The Adventizer* doesn't cost—it pays!

As a side benefit, using the phrase "Address Correction Requested" on all correspondence virtually eliminates the need to drop any members as "missing."

#### Active members also benefitted

Most small churches are not accustomed to having a regular newsletter. It becomes a catalyst for district unity and fosters a healthy sense of pride. Members get excited about church activities and even invite friends. Many save every newsletter, posting the calendar each month on refrigerator doors. Appreciation for the newsletter, I suppose, is greater in small multichurch districts than in large congregations where church mailings are routine.

#### Prospective members like it

Perhaps the strongest motivation I have for producing a newsletter is its influence upon guests from the community. While pastoring in Florida I had a Friend and Mother's Day Sabbath. We had more visitors than members—many attending for the first time. Our welcoming committee gleaned names, addresses, and phone numbers, then asked: "Would you be interested in receiving our newsletter? It will keep you informed about future activities of possible interest to you." One visitor noticed an ad in his newsletter for our Revelation Seminar coming up. He came and was baptized.

Visitors at worship services are

"A" interests needing lots of nurture to make them comfortable with the church family. The newsletter is a valuable tool in this process.

#### Who should do it?

Most pastors I know say they would like a newsletter but don't have time to produce it. Delegating the task might seem a good idea, but in

multichurch districts, who but the pastor really knows all the news in each church? So I write our newsletter. Volunteers maintain mailing lists and organize printing, folding, stapling, labeling, distributing, etc.

My time spent each month on the newsletter isn't more than six to eight hours. I consider it a worthy investment toward an effective ministry. ■



## crisis COUNSELING

Learn a basic model of interpersonal helping that can be applied in a variety of situations with pastor and chaplain—

*A 10-part self-study course with lessons on ministry*

- during family crises
- to the terminally ill
- to the dying
- to the bereaved
- during crisis of divorce
- during suicidal crisis

*with a concluding lecture on the when and how of referral.*



Dr. Martin W. Feldbush  
Fellow of the College of Chaplains

This course contains two textbooks—*The Minister as Crisis Counselor* and *Pastoral Care Emergencies* by David K. Switzer—study guide and audiocassettes.

US\$ 39.95

plus \$5.00 shipping and handling;  
additional shipping charges may apply  
to orders shipped outside U.S.A.

### Ministerial Continuing Education

Seminars Unlimited

P.O. Box 66, Keene, TX 76059

Information (817) 641-3643; Orders (800) 982-3344



# How mature? How involved?

**Roger L. Dudley**

## A study of faith maturity and congregational involvement among Adventist young adults



*Roger Dudley, Ed.D., is the director of the Institute of Church Ministry and professor of Christian ministry at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

**T**he Institute of Church Ministry (ICM) has reported already on the first four years of a 10-year study of Adventist teenagers and their relationships to the church,<sup>1</sup> sponsored by the North American Division, particularly the Church Ministries and Education departments. This article reports the findings of the fifth year of the study.

In 1987, the beginning year, ICM received usable surveys from 1,523 youth distributed among nearly 700 churches in the North American Division. The young people were either 15 or 16 years old and baptized members of the church. By the end of the fifth year, questionnaires had been returned by 887 members of the original sample and form the basis of this report.

**Adventist Youth Survey 5** contained 61 questions. ICM updates material on personal religion and church connections and keeps in touch with changes in such personal matters as educational plans and marital status. The bulk of the questionnaire, however, was devoted to the replication of two major areas of the Valuegenesis questionnaire that surveyed approximately 11,000 Seventh-day Adventist young people in the autumn of 1989.<sup>2</sup>

The Valuegenesis research included youth from grades 6 to 12 (ages of about 11 to 17), while the young adults in this Youth Retention Study ranged from age 19 to 21. What similarities exist between the younger and older groups in the two major areas of faith maturity and attitudes toward the local congregation?

### Connection to the Church

The survey found the person's present relationship toward the Adventist Church as follows:

Enthusiastic member	29%
So-so member	47%
Officially a member, but not in heart	15%
Have dropped out	9%

These figures are very close to those reported a year ago. The 24 percent choosing the last two responses may be essentially lost to the church unless a drastic turnaround occurs. The 9 percent who have dropped out account for 76 young people. The 15 percent who are inactive represent another 137 respondents. Actually, more than 76 persons have indicated that they have dropped membership. Over the three years that this question has appeared, a list of about 130 has been compiled, but only 76 of these returned surveys this year.

And what about the 582 youth who filled out the first-year survey but who did not respond this year and who did not claim in past years to have dropped church membership? It can be assumed that many of them are inactive or have officially dropped out. If this were true of even half (a conservative estimate), that would be 291 added to the 130 dropouts and the 137 who claimed to be inactive this year, or a total of 558 who have left either officially or in heart. That would be over 36 percent of the group who began. A 36 percent loss in just five years is probably an underestimation.

In assessing connection to the

church, researchers might ask not only about what has happened but about what these young adults expect will happen in the next few years. One of the most important questions on the Valuegenesis study was: "When you are 40 years old, do you think you will be active in the Adventist Church?" This question was also included on Youth Survey 5. Possible answers are listed below along with the percentage choosing each answer on both the Valuegenesis study and the present research.

Response	Value- genesis	Youth Survey 5
No chance	2%	3%
Small chance	7%	9%
Fair chance	19%	19%
Good chance	45%	36%
Excellent chance	27%	33%

While Valuegenesis was looking at adolescents in grades 6 to 12 and Youth Survey 5 dealt with college-age youth, the two groups were very close except that they divided between "good" and "excellent" somewhat differently. But if "good" and "excellent" are combined, the totals are 72 percent and 69 percent respectively—differences too small to be significant.

About seven out of 10 are planning to remain in the church. Of course, it may not turn out that way. Some of these may later give up. Nevertheless, it does present an encouraging picture. On the other hand, the church cannot afford to write off the 12 percent that already see little or no chance of a future as Adventists. Remember also that many of those who are most vulnerable to dropping out have already been removed from these statistics by not responding to the survey.

### Faith maturity

A major portion of the questionnaire was given to replicating the mature faith scale from the Valuegenesis study. In this conceptual scheme faith maturity is not simply a set of right beliefs. Rather, it is conceived more as a way of life, as a set of priorities, dispositions, and behaviors that evidence that faith is deep,

## Mature Faith Statements

	VG	YS5
I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.	54%	56%
I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross and rose again.	98%	98%
My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.	60%	54%
I help others with their religious questions and struggles.	30%	32%
I tend to be critical of other people (reversed scoring).	30%	26%
In my free time I help people who have problems or needs.	30%	31%
My faith helps me know right from wrong.	81%	72%
I do things to help protect the environment.	43%	50%
I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.	25%	22%
I have a hard time accepting myself (reversed scoring).	28%	23%
Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world.	77%	71%
I take excellent care of my physical health.	71%	57%
I am active in efforts to promote social justice.	43%	21%
I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.	41%	33%
I take time for periods of prayer or meditation.	41%	35%
I am active in efforts to promote world peace.	21%	12%
I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine.	92%	94%
I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.	45%	38%
As I grow older my understanding of God changes.	79%	72%
I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have (reversed scoring).	48%	43%
I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.	18%	16%
I speak out for equality for women and minorities.	43%	33%
I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.	47%	42%
My life is filled with meaning and purpose.	66%	59%
I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world (reversed scoring).	29%	18%
I believe that I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved (reversed scoring).	78%	63%
I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis, no matter how serious.	61%	63%
I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my country and throughout the world.	50%	46%
I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.	31%	29%
My life is committed to Jesus Christ.	75%	55%
I talk with other people about my faith.	42%	44%
My life is filled with stress and anxiety (reversed scoring).	44%	46%
I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.	45%	42%
I have a real sense that God is guiding me.	60%	47%
I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues (reversed scoring).	54%	59%
I like to worship and pray with others.	49%	45%
I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.	54%	45%
I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation.	75%	77%

vibrant, and life-changing, and it embraces two overall themes. A person of mature faith experiences both a life-transforming relationship with a loving God—the *vertical* theme—and a consistent devotion to serving others: the *horizontal* theme.

Thirty-eight representative statements of mature faith were constructed for the Mature Faith Scale. In the comparisons between Valuegenesis and Youth Survey 5 (see box on page 17), the percentages are the combined responses of those who chose either “often true,” “almost always true,” or “always true” for each item.

Those items labeled “reversed scoring” are stated negatively as far as the concept of faith maturity goes. Thus, when they were calculated into the Mature Faith Scale, the numbers were reversed so that choice number 1 (never true) received the highest rating and vice versa.

On a number of items the percentages are quite close. However, the young adults are at least five points *lower* (after reversing negative items) than the Valuegenesis subjects on the following items: faith shaping everyday actions, faith helping to know right from wrong, seeing evidence of God’s activity in the world, seeking opportunities for spiritual growth, time for prayer, efforts to promote world peace, responsibility for reducing pain and suffering, a changing understanding of God, God’s presence in relationships with others, meaning and purpose in life, churches becoming involved in political issues, and creating international harmony. They are at least 10 points lower on caring for physical health, speaking for equality for women and minorities, obedience to God’s commandments, and a sense of God’s guidance. Furthermore, they are at least 20 points lower on efforts to promote social justice and commitment to Jesus Christ.

By contrast, the young adults are at least five points *higher* than the Valuegenesis subjects only on protecting the environment, self-acceptance, and handling their responsibilities and obligations, and 11 points higher on harmonizing a loving God

with the presence of pain and suffering.

The young adults in this sample are thus lower than the younger students on this measure of faith maturity. Percentages seem especially low on such items as time for Bible study (22 percent), efforts to promote social justice (21 percent), efforts to promote world peace (12 percent), and time and money to help others (16 percent). Moreover, these respondents are the 58 percent of the original random sample that have chosen to remain in the study—probably more dedicated than those who have discontinued participation.

When the scores on the individual items are summed into a Mature Faith Scale, about 1 percent of the sample fall into the low faith maturity category, about 90 percent can be categorized as having moderate faith maturity, and about 9 percent evidence high faith maturity. In the Valuegenesis study 22 percent of the students fell into the high faith maturity class—a statistic that was widely decried as being too low. This must

make the present 9 percent a cause for real alarm.

### Congregational climate

The Valuegenesis survey asked the youth to think about the local church that they attend and indicate how true of that church were each of 16 statements. A five-point response format ranged from “not at all true” to “very true.” Youth Survey 5 employed the same items but made available the additional response: “I do not attend church.” An average of 9 percent selected this last option. The list below shows the combined percentages of those who answered either “quite true” or “very true” and compares the responses of the Valuegenesis subjects with those from Youth Survey 5.

The first four statements have been combined into a scale called warm church climate. It measures the extent to which the young perceive their congregations as warm, friendly places where people, even those who are different, feel at home. Unfortunately, not even half could give a

## Statements About the Local Congregation

	VG	YS5
It feels warm.	44%	36%
It accepts people who are different.	60%	42%
It is friendly.	61%	48%
Strangers feel welcome.	49%	39%
I learn a lot.	34%	28%
Most members want to be challenged to think about religious issues and ideas.	35%	30%
It challenges my thinking.	31%	25%
It encourages me to ask questions.	28%	23%
It expects people to learn and think.	40%	34%
It is boring.	28%	23%
It is open to new ideas.	37%	22%
It is caring.	60%	45%
It emphasizes rules and regulations.	43%	38%
It emphasizes grace and forgiveness.	58%	42%
It accepts me as I am.	66%	50%
I go to things at my church because I want to.	50%	56%

wholehearted endorsement to the individual items. The average for the four items was only 41 percent. The Valuegenesis average was 54 percent, and that was considered unacceptably low. Another scale was formed from the fifth through the ninth statements (see page 18). These five items were labeled the thinking church climate scale. As can be seen from a study of the content, it seeks perceptions as to whether the church climate encourages reasoning and exploring new ideas rather than mindless conformity. In other words, do you have to park your brains to be a good Adventist?

Unfortunately, important as it is to any system of nurture and development, such a climate seems to be scarce. While an average of only 45 percent of the Valuegenesis respondents saw their congregations as places that respect and foster thinking, the young adults in the Youth Retention Study had an even lower opinion, with an average of 28 percent.

Learning to think for oneself is an

important part of achieving responsible adulthood. If young people come to feel that the climate of the congregation is antagonistic to that purpose, the church will likely lose them.

The last seven statements in the list on the previous page consist of two that are negative and five that are positive. It seems particularly alarming that only a little more than a fifth saw the church as open to new ideas and that no more than half believed that their congregations emphasized grace and forgiveness, were caring, or accepted them as they were. On four of the positive items the young adults were even lower than the Valuegenesis group. Slightly more went to things at church because they wanted to, but this probably reflects the increased independence that accompanies entry into young adulthood.

### Conclusion

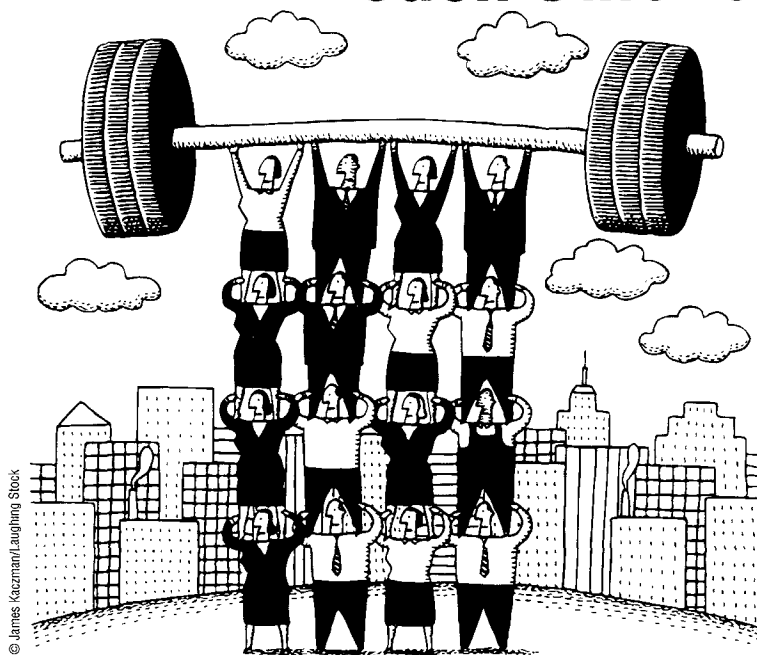
The findings of the fifth year of this Youth Retention Study reveal that

Adventist young adults are only moderate in faith maturity, even lower than teenagers, and that they generally have negative attitudes toward their local congregations, especially in the areas of warmth, challenge to thinking, and relevance. An estimated 36 percent have already essentially left the church, and others are soon to follow. The future of Adventism in North America depends upon a careful, intentional response to these challenges on the part of church leaders and those who minister to youth and young adults. ■

<sup>1</sup> For a complete report on the first two years, see Roger L. Dudley and Janet Leigh Kangas, *The World of the Adventist Teenager* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1990). See also Dudley and Kangas, "How Adventist Teenagers Perceive Their Church," *Ministry*, October 1989, pp. 4-7; Dudley and Gan-Theow Ng, "Adventist Youth Cry Out!" *Ministry*, April 1992, pp. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Roger L. Dudley, *Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance* (marginal notations by V. Bailey Gillespie) (Riverside, Calif.: La Sierra University Press, 1992).

## This November we'll be giving each other a lift.



**S**o you said yes to the church nominating committee. What do you do with this new responsibility? Do you sometimes feel alone...like you're carrying the whole ministry upon your shoulders? Don't miss this opportunity to network with friends and learn from over fifty ministry specialists. Choose from ten conferences sponsored by Adventist professional organizations. "We'll buff you up!"

### PLUSLINE EXPO '94

**November 4-6, 1994  
Los Angeles Airport Marriott**

PACIFIC UNION CONFERENCE OF  
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS

**Call: 800 732-7587 or 805 497-9457**

# Changes at the Watchtower

**Edward Eugene Ross**

**Over the past century, Jehovah's Witnesses have dramatically altered their teachings.**



*Edward Eugene Ross is a freelance writer and researcher in Grants Pass, Oregon.*

**J**ehovah's Witnesses began in 1872 when 20-year-old Charles Taze Russell and several friends formed a Bible study class. Much has changed as the movement has grown to include more than four million members.

One thing has remained the same: JW<sup>1</sup> leaders still claim to be the voice of God presenting His message to the world.<sup>2</sup> They say that God "has made understanding the Bible dependent upon" being connected with JWs,<sup>3</sup> who alone have the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup> and alone enjoy divine direction.<sup>5</sup> JWs assert that "there is no God anywhere except among the Witnesses."<sup>6</sup> All non-JW "religious leaders . . . are under the control of Satan" and "are enemies of God."<sup>7</sup> Predictably, JWs are not favorable toward Seventh-day Adventists. Of us they say: "Their leaders and teachers . . . seem to be hopelessly entangled in false teachings."<sup>8</sup> They "worship the fire-god, the sun, the heathen god."<sup>9</sup>

JWs base their claims on a consistent proclamation of unchanging truth: "A new view of truth never can contradict a former truth. New light never extinguishes older light, but adds to it. If you were lighting up a building containing seven gas jets, you would not extinguish one every time you lighted another, but would add one light to another and they would be in harmony and thus give increase of light: So is it with the light of truth; the true increase is by adding to, not by substituting one for another."<sup>10</sup>

According to JW leaders, the way to prove they are the "prophet of God . . . is to review the record. What does it show?"<sup>11</sup> Actually the record shows that JWs have taught many things they now disbelieve. Let us examine a few examples.

## **Never a contradiction?**

From at least 1882 to 1927, JWs correctly taught that the "higher powers" of Romans 13:1-7 are "earthly rulers . . . , the governments of this world."<sup>12</sup> In the late 1920s, however, JWs said that all "the nations of the world are under the control of Satan."<sup>13</sup> "Only" Jehovah God and Jesus Christ constitute the higher powers;<sup>14</sup> they "alone . . . , not the kings and dictators and presidents or other political rulers."<sup>15</sup>

By their own testimony, then, previous JW teaching was a "perversion . . . and . . . misapplication of Scripture,"<sup>16</sup> a false doctrine "inherited" from paganism.<sup>17</sup> But wait, in the 1960s they again reversed themselves, explaining Romans 13:1-7 as "not Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, but the political rulers."<sup>18</sup> "Paul . . . is clearly talking about authorities in the governments of this world."<sup>19</sup>

Another instance in which JW leaders found new light that contradicted older teaching relates to the pyramids of Egypt. For about 40 years JWs taught that "the Great Pyramid [of Gizeh, Egypt] . . . commends itself to us as a work of God"<sup>20</sup> and "God . . . placed the Great Pyramid" in Egypt.<sup>21</sup>

But soon after 1927 this stone "Witness" was dumped by the very leaders who had been endorsing it. They decreed that "those who have relied upon the pyramid . . . have been led away from God and from His service. . . . It is certain that the pyramid of Gizeh was not built by Jehovah God; nor was it built at His command. . . . It is more reasonable to conclude that the great pyramid . . . [was] built by the rulers of Egypt and under the direction of Satan . . . and . . . may be called Satan's Bible, and not God's stone witness . . . , [for] the Devil himself superintended the building of the pyramid."<sup>22</sup>

Consider that in the light of this assertion of JW leadership: "What we say is not of our own originality but from God."<sup>23</sup> However, a back-and-forth representation of the God who never changes suggests otherwise.

### Misstatements on health

JW leaders also have misspoken for God in matters of health. They used to promote "a simple cure for appendicitis symptoms. The pain in the appendix region is caused by the biting of worms near the junction of the transverse colon with the small intestines, low down on the right side of the abdomen. This remedy is recommended also for typhoid fever, which is also a worm disease. The medicine is Santonine: dose, three grains, an hour before breakfast; repeated for four mornings, or until all the symptoms disappear. Then one dose per month for three months to eradicate all germs."<sup>24</sup> Of course, anyone with basic medical knowledge understands that appendicitis and typhoid fever are not worm diseases!

JW leaders also published anti-vaccination statements that proved mistaken: "Thinking people would rather have smallpox than vaccination, because the latter sows the seed of syphilis, cancers, . . . scrofula, consumption, even leprosy, and many other loathsome afflictions. Hence the practice of vaccination is a crime, an outrage and a delusion."<sup>25</sup> "Vaccination has never saved a human life. It does not prevent smallpox."<sup>26</sup> "Vaccination is a direct violation of the

holy law of Jehovah . . . , is against the sovereign will of . . . God."<sup>27</sup>

Several years later, JW leaders changed "the holy law of Jehovah," lifting "all objection to vaccination on Scriptural grounds."<sup>28</sup> JW members are now told: "Make a 'personal decision . . . on the basis of what you feel is the best course . . . for your own health.'"<sup>29</sup> A decree from JW leaders, not the Bible, made the difference! Incidentally, they now acknowledge that "vaccinations appear to have caused a marked decrease in . . . smallpox . . . [and] polio"<sup>30</sup> and are "effective in eliminating diseases that were once scourges—measles, smallpox, typhoid, diphtheria, and others."<sup>31</sup>

### Failed prophecies

As the years have passed, JW leaders also have had to cope with failed expectations of prophecy. In 1889 they predicted: "Within the coming 26 years all present governments will be overthrown and dissolved; . . . the final end of the kingdoms of this world . . . will be accomplished by the end of A.D. 1914 . . . [Armageddon] will end in A.D. 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership."<sup>32</sup> They made seven major predictions to be fulfilled by 1915. All failed.

Later date-setting attempts also misfired, such as this one: "In the year 1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by millions. . . . In the year 1918, when Christendom shall go down as a system to oblivion."<sup>33</sup> Succeeding time-setting failures involved the years 1925, 1941, and 1975.

Regarding the prophecy of Daniel 8, they declared: "2300 days . . . 2300 literal years,"<sup>34</sup> from "455 B.C."<sup>35</sup> to "1846, . . . when the Sanctuary was due to be cleansed."<sup>36</sup> They later switched to only "six years four months and twenty days, . . . from . . . May 25, 1926 . . . to October 15, 1932."<sup>37</sup> Later still: "At the earliest this was . . . June 1, 1938 . . . to . . . (October 8), 1944."<sup>38</sup>

JW leaders have also changed their minds about the meaning of Christ's second coming. For more than 40 years they taught that Jesus' first com-

ing was a physical and personal one. Regarding John 14:3, where Jesus promised to come again, "Jesus taught His *second personal coming*,"<sup>39</sup> "His second personal presence and appearing."<sup>40</sup> The literal, bodily, personal "Christ came . . . in 1874";<sup>41</sup> "the second coming . . . , second advent, . . . second presence . . . , in Autumn of 1874."<sup>42</sup>

Thus, from 1879 until 1928 (about 54 years *after* 1874, and 14 years *after* 1914), JW leaders were teaching that Jesus had physically and personally returned to earth in 1874: "The Lord has come and is now present [since 1874]. . . . The hour and the day have already passed. He is here! . . . The Lord has returned and is here, invisible to human eyes."<sup>43</sup> About this same time they began switching to 1914 and an *in spirit* coming. They doctrinally installed "Christ as King" of God's kingdom in heaven "in 1914," calling this "Jesus' second 'coming,' or His 'presence,'" <sup>44</sup> "the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ invisibly in 1914."<sup>45</sup> "Christ's second advent . . . has taken place even though he actually resides [remains] in heaven. He has returned *in that* he has turned his attention to . . . earth . . . , his return *by* directing his attention to . . . earth."<sup>46</sup> "Christ's return is not a literal coming back to earth,"<sup>47</sup> for "Christ's second presence is in spirit" only,<sup>48</sup> merely a "return in spirit," mentally, in thought.<sup>49</sup> This eliminates and rejects a second personal coming in 1874 or 1914 or in the future, for they don't believe Jesus is ever coming *again*. They now teach that Jesus is to remain always in heaven, never returning to earth.

### Escaping from error

JW leaders have often claimed that their denominational "presentations are orthodox, correct, and sound doctrinally,"<sup>50</sup> and if their teaching of "truth . . . be not of God we would be glad to have it overthrown, that we and others might be delivered from error."<sup>51</sup>

In light of such statements, it should not surprise us that some JW members, learning of all the errors

and contradictions, have let the truth set them free. Many will yet become Seventh-day Adventist Christians when we present them with God's love and His truth. ■

<sup>1</sup> "JW" was originally coined and used by their president in 1931, and is still being used by them—1975 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pp. 149-151; *Awake!*, Feb. 22, 1990, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Eugene Ross, *Jehovah's Witness Leaders: False Prophets*, pp. 10-17.

<sup>3</sup> *Watchtower*, Nov. 1, 1961, p. 668.

<sup>4</sup> *Qualified to Be Ministers*, 1955 ed., p. 151.

<sup>5</sup> *Watchtower*, July 1, 1973, p. 402.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1, 1974, p. 407.

<sup>7</sup> *Salvation*, p. 255; *Watchtower*, June 15, 1929, p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> *Watchtower*, Sept. 15, 1892, pp. 275-279.

<sup>9</sup> *The Finished Mystery*, 1917 ed., pp. 160, 227, 426.

<sup>10</sup> *Watchtower*, July 1880, p. 7; February 1881, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 1, 1972, p. 197.

<sup>12</sup> *Studies in the Scriptures I* (henceforth called *Studies*), p. 266.

<sup>13</sup> *Salvation*, pp. 260, 261.

<sup>14</sup> *Religion*, p. 206.

<sup>15</sup> *Salvation*, pp. 125, 255.

<sup>16</sup> *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 311.

<sup>17</sup> *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> *Watchtower*, Oct. 1, 1966, p. 608.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 15, 1972, p. 502.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, May 1881, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 1883, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1928, pp. 340, 343, 344.

<sup>23</sup> *Theocratic Ministry School Guidebook*, pp. 110, 122.

<sup>24</sup> *Watchtower Reprints*, vol. 6, p. 4963.

<sup>25</sup> *The Golden Age*, May 1, 1929, p. 502.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 4, 1931, pp. 293, 294.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 24, 1935, p. 471.

<sup>28</sup> *Watchtower*, Dec. 15, 1952, p. 764.

<sup>29</sup> *Awake!*, Aug. 22, 1965, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Studies II*, 1889 ed., pp. 98-101.

<sup>33</sup> *The Finished Mystery*, 1917 ed., pp. 485, 513.

<sup>34</sup> *Bible Students' Manual*, 1909 ed., p. 159.

<sup>35</sup> *Babylon the Great Has Fallen*, pp. 386-390.

<sup>36</sup> *Studies III*, p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> *Watchtower*, Oct. 1, 1959, p. 601.

<sup>38</sup> *Watchtower*, Dec. 1, 1971, pp. 724, 725.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1879, pp. 1, 2. (Italics theirs.)

<sup>40</sup> *Studies II*, p. 105.

<sup>41</sup> *Watchtower*, Oct. 1879, pp. 3, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 15, 1902, pp. 85-88.

<sup>43</sup> *The Harp of God*, 1928 ed., pp. 216, 239, 257, 269.

<sup>44</sup> *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, pp. 173, 174.

<sup>45</sup> *Watchtower*, Jan. 1, 1961, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 15, 1969, pp. 485, 486.

<sup>47</sup> *Make Sure of All Things*, 1965 ed., p. 431.

<sup>48</sup> *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 1966 ed., p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> *This Means Everlasting Life*, p. 221.

<sup>50</sup> *Watchtower*, June 15, 1900, pp. 180, 181.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, July 15, 1909, pp. 215, 216.

# Judging without being judgmental

Larre Kostenko

## A pastoral reflection on John 7:25



Larre Kostenko is pastor of Seventh-day Adventist churches in Clearwater County, Idaho.

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24).<sup>\*</sup> The simplicity of Jesus' statement belies its profundity. Those who judge must do so *righteously*; not form snap opinions based on appearances. They must *look a little closer*; gather as much factual information as possible. They must *listen to both sides*; strive to be fair and open-minded, not opinionated. They must *call sin by its name*.

### Look a little closer

Numerous cyclists shared the narrow winding road with cars, wide recreational vehicles, and pickup campers. As we were leaving Glacier National Park eastbound, I noticed white crosses along the road, each representing a traffic fatality. We must have driven about four hours when we suddenly came upon an emergency. A cyclist was sprawled out, part of his body hanging over the white line, limbs sticking out at odd angles, bicycle lying motionless on the ground. At the same time I also saw a large suburban bouncing hurriedly along in the ditch. Soon it pulled back onto the road and left the scene. It was a hit-and-run.



Instantly, my adrenaline activated as I sped toward the nearest farmhouse. I called for the ambulance and the police. Then I hurried back to see what I could do for the injured cyclist. As I approached him, he squinted up at me, through the spokes of a bicycle wheel, and went about fixing a flat tire.

I felt foolish as I returned to the farmhouse to cancel the call for emergency help. How I wished I had *looked a little closer*. I had judged by appearances. Fortunately, I discovered my error in time. How often we misjudge each other and never find out. But it pays to take time to separate appearance from fact.

### Hear both sides

When we form opinions about someone before we look a little closer and before we hear both sides, we are in fact judging from appearances. How often we make judgment calls about people we don't know and about places we've never been—all because we've heard about them and talked *about* them, but never talked *to* them. "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him" (Prov. 18:13).

What should we do when someone comes with a tale about a mutual friend? A sure sign of negative politics in any organization is negative conversations about people not in the room. To speak ill of another secretly, leaving the accused in ignorance of the wrong attributed to him or her, is not only indecent but also unchristian. And listening, when it's just one side of the story, falls in the same category.

One church administrator I know consistently refused to listen to complaints from church members against their pastors unless the pastors were present to defend themselves. Such a policy not only reflects good business management, but also conforms to the counsel of Jesus. In Matthew 18 Jesus prescribed that if we have something against a person, we

should go to that person first, not everybody else. Being direct, open, and authentic fosters positive and dynamic interpersonal relations.

A small church met to consider the request from two of its members for dropping their names from membership. The reason? The pastor had asked them to choose between membership and their current lifestyle, which violated church requirements. Both chose to withdraw from membership. At the business session, members began criticizing a sister church for disfellowshipping a couple who had violated the seventh com-

equated with judging. If "judge not" does not preclude recognizing a "dog" for what it is, neither should it come in the way of calling sin by its right name.

Jesus, who deferred judgment on the woman caught in adultery, unsparingly exposed her accusers who had led her into sin. In forgiving this woman, Jesus did not avoid dealing with the sin. Not only did He expose her tempters; He also counseled the woman to go and sin no more.

The tension between "judge not" and "judge" can also be noted in 1 Corinthians 4:5 and 1 Corinthians 5.

The first passage forbids us from judging what God alone can judge—what is hidden, including the motives of the heart.

Chapter 5, in contrast, chastises the Corinthian church for tolerating flagrant and visible sin in the church. The Corinthians had an incestuous person in church fellowship. The apostle charged the church to disfellowship the member promptly. Was Paul contradicting himself in these two passages? Certainly not. The first in-

stance deals with jumping to conclusions without factual basis. The second instance deals with church discipline on a person who openly lives in sin. In other words, in our eagerness to avoid being judgmental, we must not forget that God calls us to judge—righteously. To judge righteously means to say what God says about sin. To refuse that task is not love, but indulgence that is detrimental to all concerned.

Such a responsibility has its implications: to reject cheap grace reflected in baptism without church discipline; to call our institutions to corporate accountability in reflecting the mission of the church; and to recognize that judgmentalism and permissive indulgence are equally wrong. ■

\* All Scripture passages in this article are from *New American Standard Bible*.

---

## To judge righteously means to say what God says about sin. To refuse that task is not love, but indulgence that is detrimental to all concerned.

---

mandment. The pastor responded by narrating both sides of the story, and helped the church to visualize how they would feel were such an incident to happen among its own members, and what they would do about it. Silence reigned. Hearing both sides changed their perception of reality. They were now prepared to concern themselves with their own agenda instead of judging the motives of a sister church.

### Calling sin by its name

The same Jesus who said we must *not judge* by appearances also said to *judge righteously*. We need to hear both parts. Jesus said, "Do not judge lest you be judged" (Matt. 7:1). He also said, "Do not give what is holy to dogs" (verse 6). Now, doesn't calling someone a dog amount to "judging" that person? The point is clear: recognizing plain facts is not to be



# Family evangelism in Mexico

Adly Campos

**D**uring our family evangelism campaign in a Mexico City suburb, 1,600 persons completed the Family Life Seminar course, and 219 were baptized. Moreover, 70 couples renewed their marriage vows—14 of them wearing their original wedding outfits. In the aftermath, more than 300 attendees are continuing to study in preparation for baptism.

From my work in metropolitan family evangelism, three keys to success have emerged:

## 1. Preparation and seed-sowing

Our goal is to get *all* local church members involved in the campaign. Counsel on this point is clear:

“The leaders in God’s cause, as wise generals, are to lay plans for advance moves all along the line. In their planning they are to give special study to the work that can be done by the

laity for their friends and neighbors. The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 351).

“The minister and the church members are to unite as one person in laboring for the upbuilding and prosperity of the church. . . . The minister’s

work is the lay member’s work as well. Heart should be bound to heart. Let all press forward, shoulder to shoulder. . . . All should be laborers together with God, and then the minister can feel that he has helpers in whom it is safe to trust. The minister can hasten this desirable end by showing that he *has* confidence in the workers by setting them to work” (Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895).



Couples reaffirm their marriage vows during the family evangelism campaign in Pantitlan, outside Mexico City.

*Adly Campos is an office secretary for the Ministerial Association at the General Conference headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. She also is an international lay evangelist much in demand.*

"It is not the Lord's purpose that ministers should be left to do the greatest part of the work of sowing the seeds of truth. Men who are not called to the ministry are to be encouraged to labor for the Master according to their several ability. Hundreds of men and women now idle could do acceptable service. By carrying the truth into the homes of their friends and neighbors, they could do a great work for the Master" (*Christian Service*, p. 67).

Our preparation includes three parts:

a. In the congregation itself: We announce the coming campaign and what we hope it will accomplish. Good communication is essential. If possible, we hold a week of lay training to inspire and equip lay members to work efficiently.

b. In the territory: The 20-lesson course of the Family Life Seminar is useful. Church members invite friends, relatives, and neighbors into their homes for study. This phase of preparation lasts from two to three months, providing time for participants to plant the gospel seed and nurture it into a fervent interest for Christ.

c. Among the supporting staff: Different committees are established to plan various aspects of the campaign: music, sound, projection, reception, lights, appointments, decoration, literature, transportation, prayer bands, plus the marriage vows renewal and graduation ceremonies. These committees then assign workers specific tasks.

## 2. Cultivating the seed in public and personal evangelism

Basically, this phase of preparation lasts from two to four weeks. We begin the campaign in concentrating on family life themes. Every spiritual lesson opens with a tie-in with family life and closes with the presentation of a basic church doctrine from Scripture.

To illustrate: When speaking about

salvation, we show how the modern home is in crisis, lost, and in need of a Saviour to rescue and reestablish it. Just before God's law is presented, we present the laws of discipline in the home. Before the state of the dead is presented, we speak of how the death of a loved one affects the home. Before we present the day of rest, we talk about a day when the family can be more united.

Before the campaign itself begins, we like to have a graduation ceremony for all who complete the Family Life Seminar lessons. Typically, from this group the majority of baptisms come. From 20 to 25 percent of the graduates of the course will be

baptized before the close of the lectures. An additional 15 to 25 percent will request baptism in the follow-up. In other words, from 40 to 50 percent of the new graduates of the course, who are not already church members, will be baptized during or after the campaign.

## 3. Harvest evangelism

Those who remained unbaptized during the campaign can take that step during our follow-up program. Weekly baptismal classes are fruitful, along with home Bible studies, further Bible seminars, and assigning laypersons to continue working with and preparing them. ■

*It is the largest evangelistic initiative in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America . . . and it is your last chance to get involved.*

Net '95 is using 21st Century technology to convey a message that is both timeless and timely--the Adventist message of a soon-coming Christ. February 18 through March 25, 1995, every local church that would like Mark Finley and C. D. Brooks to hold meetings in their community can make that happen. A satellite link will bring them each evening to your church or auditorium at 7:30 p.m. local time. During the first two weeks Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights; during the last three weeks Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights.

### How to prepare?

- ◆ Phone and get a starter kit -- (800) 253-3000.
- ◆ Begin to pray daily for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this effort.
- ◆ Order the downlink equipment -- (800) ACN-1119.
- ◆ Invite your church to participate in the live 150th Anniversary event with GC president Robert Folkenberg on Sabbath afternoon, October 22. (4-6 p.m. EDT)
- ◆ Help your church prepare spiritually by joining the United Prayer Conference on November 19 by live satellite connection.
- ◆ Build the image of your church in the community and prepare the ground for public evangelism with pre-evangelism activities this fall.

If you would like to talk more about it, dial (800) 982-3344, the special Net '95 Help Desk that has been set up at *Seminars Unlimited*.

**NET'95**

*an evangelism initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America*  
*Alfred C. McClure, president - Robert Dale, project chairman*



# The fine art of pastoral visitation

James A. Cress

**S**ome believe pastoral visitation is dead. However, when members describe qualities of the ideal pastor, they typically list visitation as a high priority.

While societal trends may change expectations, most members still welcome a personal visit from their pastor. When I surveyed my members on their desire for visitation, most indicated their strong preference for visitation only by appointment. Other pastors say that their members have different expectations and want the pastor to "drop in" anytime.

Pastoral visitation is not dead. It may be bungled at best or ignored at worst, but it remains a fine art that brings enormous benefits when practiced rightly. Consider the following suggestions:

**View visitation as spiritual work** in which you minister to your members and extend Christ's kingdom by inviting others to accept His Lordship. "There are families who will never be reached by the truth of God's Word unless His servants enter their homes, and by earnest ministry, sanctified by the endorsement of the Holy Spirit, break down the barriers. As the people see that these workers are messengers of mercy, the ministers of grace, they are ready to listen to the words spoken by them."\*

**Announce your intentions.** Let your members know the conditions under which you will visit. For example, I informed my members that I

would visit either by their invitation or my initiation, but I would not visit without an appointment. I also shared with them that they would receive a pastoral visit when they were hospitalized, but that such a visit might be provided by an elder.

**Make visitation a priority.** Set aside a specific time each week for visitation. If you fail to prioritize visitation time, other demands will prevent you from acting on your own good intentions. Contact visitors to your church immediately after their attendance. You should also visit members who may be experiencing challenges or crisis situations, those who have initiated contact with radio or television programs, others who are potential members, and your nonattending members.

**Do not visit alone.** Taking an elder with you has its advantages. It's in accordance with Christ's example of sending out His disciples two by two. It's a good technique for selfpreservation: why risk damaging your reputation because of what others might report you said or did when you were in their home alone? It helps train your laity. If a person whom you visit needs to begin Bible studies, you can immediately turn that contact over to the elder who has accompanied you.

**Train by association.** You will enlarge the vision of your laity leaders by taking them with you in visiting. They will see that this work is

important to you, and they will come to believe that they could reproduce your skills because they have observed you doing it rather than telling about it.

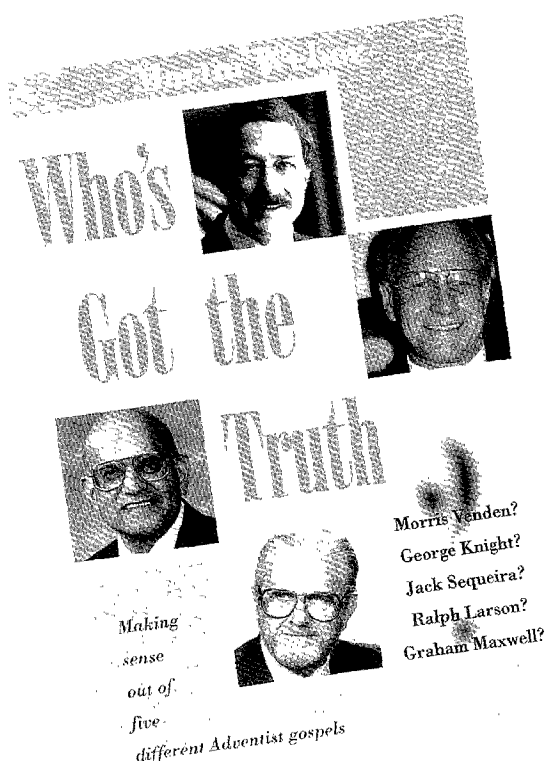
**Conserve your time** by asking some individuals to come to you rather than you traveling to them. Set up appointments at your church for those who can easily commute there for Bible studies or counseling sessions. Bunching your visits in a section of the city or an area of your district also helps.

**Make short visits.** A visit need not be everlasting in order to have eternal benefit. In the hospital, tell your parishioner that you have stopped by to pray for their need. Encourage them that God cares. Ask if they have a prayer request. Share a Scripture promise and pray for their need. Meet other patients in the same room and include them in prayer.

In evangelistic visits you can usually accomplish more in five or 10 minutes than if you stay an hour. Clearly state the purpose of your visit by giving them a tract or booklet about a topic you have recently preached. Thank them for attending your meetings. Ask an open-ended question regarding their receptiveness to what they are hearing, and request permission to pray a blessing upon their home before you leave. ■

\* Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), pp. 435, 436.

# It's so CONFUSING!



"I don't know what to believe about the gospel. The more I study, the worse it gets!"

Such is the frustration of many Adventists. They hear five beloved and persuasive leaders say different things about salvation. All appear to be reasonable and sincere. Who's got the truth . . .

**Morris Venden? George Knight? Jack Sequeira?  
Ralph Larson? Graham Maxwell?**

All five have much to contribute in terms of understanding the gospel, and there are similarities in what they teach. But there also are significant and conflicting differences.

In *Who's Got the Truth*, Martin Weber, author of *Adventist Hot Potatoes*, presents a Berean inquiry into five different gospels in the Adventist Church.

- "We've never had a book quite like this."
- "272 action-packed pages . . ."
- "probing questions, revealing answers . . ."
- "candid commentary and vigorous dialogue . . ."

**Clip and send with your check/money order to Calvary Connections, PO Box 339, Columbia, MD 21045**

No. of copies \_\_\_\_\_ Cost per book \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Shipping ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
TOTAL ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

US\$11.95 each, plus \$3.50 shipping  
anywhere (priority mail in US). Order five at  
\$9.95 each (\$49.75), \$5 shipping/\$10 outside  
US. Order ten at \$9.95 each (\$99.50), \$8  
shipping/\$20 outside US. Free study guides  
with quantity of ten books. Otherwise guides  
are \$1.50 each plus .50 shipping anywhere.  
(MD residents, sales tax already included.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Available also at Adventist Book Centers.

## The Effective Church Board: A Handbook for Mentoring and Training Servant Leaders

Michael J. Anthony, Baker Books, Grand Rapids (1-800-877-2665), 1993, US\$14.99, 301 pages, paper. Reviewed by Michael J. Lay, pastor, Belleville and Kingston Seventh-day Adventist churches, Ontario, Canada.

Michael Anthony bases his practical and readable book on results from a survey of pastors and church board members across the United States.

The author knows his subject. He is the chair of the Department of Christian Education at Talbot Seminary and has held staff positions in five churches. The book has three parts: "Laying the Groundwork for Service," "Mastering the Art of Serving Others," and "Leading During Crisis Periods of Ministry." Part 1 gives a humorous overview of what people expect of an "ideal" senior pastor ("He makes 15 calls a day on church members, spends his time evangelizing the unchurched, and is never out of the office . . ."). The author then lists misconceptions of pastors and board members. He gives a "right on" presentation of the biblical background and history of church offices: pastor, elder, deacon, and deaconess. He includes a valuable chapter on job descriptions with samples. Good adaptable ideas abound.

Part 2 talks about the nuts and bolts of effective church management: preparing mission statements, utilizing team ministry, teaching leadership, organizing, planning and goal setting, resolving interpersonal conflict, modeling a biblical lifestyle, and dealing with problems in the church.

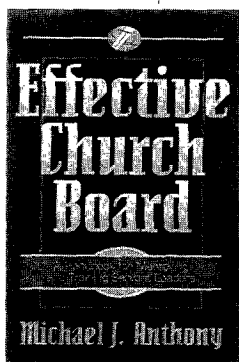
Leadership styles differ between pastors and board members and can cause misunderstandings. Anthony's discussion of character qualities versus leadership styles uses excellent scriptural material.

Part 3 deals with unpleasant areas of ministry that we need to recognize. Anthony draws from his experience to

suggest a variety of approaches in handling sensitive issues. He outlines clear and logical steps to use in crisis situations.

At the end of each chapter discussion questions lend themselves to group study. Suggestions for further reading, two appendixes, and chapter notes further enhance the value of the book.

I highly recommend the book as an effective tool for church leaders.



## Theo-Economics

Roland J. Hill, Helping Hands Press, PO Box 133, Keene, Texas 76059 (1-817-645-3258), 1994, 175 pages, \$24.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Tony Campolo, author, lecturer, and professor of sociology, Eastern College, St. Davids, Pennsylvania.

*Theo-Economics* is exactly what the subtitle of the book suggests: *A Call to Responsibility*. In an age when more and more people behave as though society owes them a living, Roland Hill, religion professor at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas, calls us to recognize that God's will for us is to prosper through hard work and ingenuity.

Hill helps us to see work, not as a curse, but a privilege. Through a biblically prescribed lifestyle we can enter into our everyday labor in a way that enhances spirituality and models the principles of the kingdom of God.

*Theo-Economics* calls into question the destructive competitiveness that is so often a part of laissez-faire capitalism. The author encourages us to work on removing those barriers to economic prosperity so evident in society. He calls on us to attack racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination that interfere with the economy and the opportunities free persons deserve.

Hill helps us to see a God concerned about the economic affairs of our daily lives. The author shows how the Bible

provides a basis for ordering our business responsibilities. He makes his own religious convictions clear and understandable, challenging those outside of his denomination to see the richness of its teachings.

As in any good book, the reader will disagree with some points. But most important, this book makes economic theory readable and a part of a faith relationship. I find that a notable achievement.

## Reconnecting: How to Renew and Preserve the Three Vital Elements of a Powerful Spiritual Life

Ronnie W. Floyd, Broadman and Holman Publishers (1-800-251-3225), 1993, 168 pages, US\$14.99, hardcover. Reviewed by Danny R. Chandler, executive committee member, South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Madison, Mississippi.

The timing could not have been better. I stood at one of those junctures in life wondering what had happened to my plans. Along came *Reconnecting*. I had barely finished the first chapter when I paused to thank God for sending me this book.

Ronnie Floyd writes about his call to the ministry, his life as a pastor, husband, and father. But the layperson will also find the book reader-friendly. No deep theological surmises separate those trained to think ecclesiastically and those who study only the Bible. Nevertheless, enough nuggets inspire the intellect to dig deeper. The author uses personal experiences to explain his topics, and they work well.

Floyd sets forth three goals for his book: to motivate believers, awaken them spiritually, and have them use the book as a study guide. The "three vital elements of a powerful spiritual life" include the upward connection, the inward connection, and the outward connection.

*Reconnecting* succeeds in awakening the conscience to spiritual values. Floyd has written an inspiring book for the non-Christian and drifting Christian as well as those already connected in an intimate relationship with Jesus.

## THEO-ECONOMICS

*The Call To Responsibility*

A Revolutionary Approach to Economics

Dr. Roland Hill



## **The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World**

*Paul Davies, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1992, 254 pages, US\$22.50, hardcover. Reviewed by James Ayers, pastor, South Frankfort Presbyterian Church, Frankfort, Kentucky.*

This best-selling book by a well-known science writer attempts to draw science and religion together. But as impressive as Paul Davies' credentials are as a scientist, as a theologian he lacks background. Nevertheless, *The Mind of God* has been popular with secular audiences, and pastors should know what it says.

Where did the universe come from? We have two traditional ways of approaching the question: by seeking to understand the universe as it now appears and working backward toward its origin (doing "science"); or by seeking a source of revelation that explains God's purpose (theology). Davies wonders if there is a route that bypasses human reason. "As a scientist I would rather try to take human reasoning as far as it will go." That does not sound promising for a book that claims an interest in the mind of God, but it does indicate that Davies' efforts to understand God's mind will be limited to the science half of the investigation. The author concludes that science can tell us many fascinating things about the how of the universe. But when we ask why it exists, we are faced by mystery. The author leaves untouched the exploration of this mystery.

Yet that exploration by a scientist could be fruitful. Davies shows a fine grasp of theological questions raised by science, but lacks understanding of the Western philosophical or theological traditions. He cites Plato and Aristotle as found in recent commentaries on the ancients, but offers not a single citation from either. His citation of Christian tradition, particularly its historical struggle with the issue, is also limited.

However, I found the book helpful for its explanations of various scientific theories of the past two decades. It was also interesting to note the author's frank conclusion that the scientific method of studying the physical universe does by definition con-

fine itself to physical phenomena, and therefore the existence of God and the purpose of life are beyond the book's self-imposed limitations.

## **J. Hudson Taylor**

*Roger Steer, Harold Shaw Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois (1-800-742-9782), 1993, 375 pages, US\$10.99, paper. Reviewed by Rick Ferret, Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Papua New Guinea.*

This is the first book I have read on the life and achievements of J. Hudson Taylor, missionary to China and the embodiment of a true worker for God. I want to read more. I too am a missionary involved in the work for several years now. This book has challenged my attitudes and commitment to God's leading. Times may be different from Taylor's day (1832-1905), but Roger Steer reemphasizes through Taylor's life story the meaning of commitment.

Being a missionary may not be a grand concept for many today, but this book focuses on God's leading in the life of one willing to endure enormous suffering to follow Him in a difficult mission field. Steer writes about prayer, a simple lifestyle, a well-founded faith, and Christian maturity through adversity. This book teaches us, whether missionary or not, how to practice daily the presence of God.

Few have been able to influence China for God like Taylor. He truly became one with the people he served. During his career he made 11 trips to China, founding a large Christian mission. By the time he died at age 73 more than 18,000 Chinese had accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour.

No miracle missionary, Taylor knew tragedy. He lost his wife and children. He lived in a difficult world.

Time develops the character of an individual, and his was one of greatness. The church today needs to hear his story again. His story causes us to consider basic issues: Does God still lead? What is prayer? What is witness? What is commitment?

## **Computer Bible Study**

*Jeffrey Hsu, Word Books, Waco, Texas*

*(1-800-933-9673), 1993, 192 pages, US\$12.99, paper. Reviewed by Jim Ellithorpe, pastor, Cranston, Rhode Island.*

If you are confused about the plethora of computer materials available to churches, Jeffrey Hsu's book may be just what you need. Hsu is an experienced author, consultant, and journalist specializing in computers and scientific technologies. Hsu does an excellent job in surveying all the latest information on church computer technology. His chapter for the novice is especially good. He then adds to the strong base and gives the reader advice about electronic Bible study and study aids. He provides a resource listing extensive enough to give the local church a head start in finding software for their needs.

The only area that disappointed me had to do with church management systems. Hsu did not deal with this area even though it is one in which pastors desperately need answers.

Readers beware. Computer technology constantly changes. By the time you read this review, new and more innovative materials will be on the market. But don't hesitate to purchase now. Do the best you can today, keeping tomorrow in mind, and with Hsu's book you will do well.

## **Successful Women's Events: Everything You Need to Know to Make Them Happen**

*Madlyn Lewis Hamblin and Cari Hoyt Haus, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Hagerstown, Maryland (1-800-765-6955), 1993, 128 pages, US\$9.95, paper. Reviewed by Marilyn Lay, homemaker and pastor's wife, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.*

*Successful Women's Events* shows how to plan, promote, advertise, and follow through on a program for women, whether you are planning a day or a weekend retreat. The authors provide information for all your basic needs, including menus. This is an excellent reference book for pastoral wives, pastors, and anyone in the church interested in women's ministry.



---

## First love

From page 4

as the ministry. Then sermons don't come from the heart but from someone else's idea or story; hospital visits become something we do because we're supposed to rather than because we feel compassion for one who's hurting; our minds tend to wander during counseling sessions rather than hearing and feeling the pain of the person sitting across from us.

It's dangerous to lose our first love, whether it be for God or the ministry. I'm not intimating that anyone reading this doesn't love God, but it's so easy to have that first love slip quietly away without realizing it.

The church in Ephesus lost their first love. God spoke to them and said, "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance . . . You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: *You have forsaken your first love.* Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first" (Rev. 2:2-5, NIV).

These Christians had not lost their love for God. In fact, He affirmed them for what they were doing. But enduring, persevering, and not growing weary don't mean much if the initial love is missing.

### Remember and return

What can cause a pastor to lose his or her first love for the ministry? Many things. Overwork, critical members, poor time management, seeing the ministry as a "job" rather than a service, members' high expectations, being pulled in too many directions, and, of course, losing first love for God.

So if we feel we've lost it, if the ministry has become a drudgery rather than a joy, how do we get that first love back? The advice to Ephesus is also advice to us: "*Remember the height from which you have fallen!*"

*Repent and do the things you did at first.*" Let me invite you to take some time away to think about this text. Get alone in your study, go for a drive or walk, and remember. Remember like the text says. Remember what it was like when you first came to know God and the miracle He brought to your life. Remember early answers to prayer and review His leading over the past years. Remember the things that kept you close to Him back then, and as the text invites, "*do the things you did at first.*"

I've learned that as with any relationship, I must work at my relationship with God. The times when I've felt my first love for God or the ministry slipping, it wasn't because He moved, but because I had unintentionally moved.

I remember a story told by one of my theology professors that made a real impression on me. An elderly couple were driving to church on a Sabbath morning. They were each sitting in their corner of the front seat when the wife turned to her husband and said, "Honey, why don't we sit close to each other in the car, the way we used to?" Her husband turned to her and answered, "I haven't moved." He'd been behind the steering wheel all those years, while she'd moved toward the other side of the seat!

Sometimes we have similar conversations with God. We say to Him, "Lord, remember when we used to be so close? Remember when we had a relationship that was alive and the ministry was my passion?" And He answers us, "I haven't moved. I've been here all along. But you've slipped away through the years."

Although I don't regret my decision to take a leave of absence from paid ministry, being away from it has made me realize even more how fortunate I was that I had the opportunity to pastor. For those of you pastors reading this, I want to remind you of the incredible special calling you have. You're like one of the twelve, one of those close to Jesus whom He taught and then sent out to finish His work.

*Remember.* Remember the height and return. Return to first love. ■

---

## Negotiating with the law

From page 5

When Sinai confronts us with our sinfulness, we can flee for refuge to Calvary. There the forgiving love of God fills us with grateful love—which stimulates fervent commandment keeping.

One final note. One of the Ten Commandments is different from the others, seemingly prescriptive rather than descriptive. While nine commandments obviously are unchangeable moral principles, the seventh-day Sabbath seems subject to change. After all, what difference does one day make over another?

Upon deeper observation, however, we see that the seventh-day Sabbath cannot change because it memorializes two historic events that Christ finished on the sixth day and commemorated on the seventh: creation and redemption. The gifts of life from Eden and new life from Calvary are the basic reasons we worship God, love Him, and want to obey Him; therefore, the Sabbath rest that memorializes this life in Christ motivates obedience that fulfills the other commandments.

Nine commandments prescribe spiritual labor, while the Sabbath (which means "cessation") offers rest from labor in Christ's finished work. Thus genuine Sabbath rest in Jesus safeguards obedient Christians from legalism. ■

---

## Needed: gospel preaching

From page 11

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), pp. 156, 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> ———, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 25.

## Grandparents Day

Grandparents Day in September has become a tradition in churches I have pastored. We do the following:

1. Award prizes to the oldest grandparent(s), the youngest grandparent(s), the one with the most grandchildren and great-grandchildren present, plus the one with the youngest grandchild and also the oldest.

2. Have grandchildren do a pictorial interpretation of "grandparents" on overhead transparencies.

3. Videotape grandparents with grandchildren, adding appropriate background music for a touching presentation.

4. Ask grandparents and their grandchildren to present special music.

5. Honor all grandparents with a small gift.

6. Invite a grandparent with an interesting life story to speak.

7. Use grandparents and their grandchildren as ushers.

If grandparents cannot be present, a family can adopt a set. The same is true if grandchildren can't attend the activities; even neighborhood children can fill in.

Grandparents Day has become extremely successful in my ministry. Often they travel hundreds of miles to attend. Quite a few grandchildren participate who do not attend church regularly. The result is an exciting day with a top attendance.—Betty Robertson, Bethany, Oklahoma.

## Don't be ambushed

Being ambushed at

board meetings is a most stressful event for many pastors. By this I mean a member introducing an unexpected complaint or criticism.

Having been ambushed a number of times, I have convinced the church board to establish an "absolutely no ambush policy." This means that no one can bring any criticism or complaint to a meeting against any member who is unaware of what is coming.

Now board members themselves nip in the bud any attempt at ambushment. This simple little policy has made board meetings a delight.—Thomas Schultz, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

## Resurrecting sermon classics

"A preacher usually delivers one great sermon a year," someone observed. If so, during the course of your ministry you might deliver 40 or 50 great sermons. Should they be forgotten, or have they any continuing value?

One retired ministerial colleague told me: "Perhaps my children, grandchildren, or former churches (for historical purposes) would like a few of my selected sermons. If I can't get a publisher to risk publishing them, perhaps I could publish them myself. A clever title might help and an attractive jacket on a well-bound book might appeal, at least to me."

Another suggestion is adapting some sermons to a Bible class setting. I've taken a second look at a past sermon or two on

some of the great texts and developed a new outline from what might apply in a class I teach. This provides the benefit of both the research I've done previously and the enthusiasm of what is now on my mind.

The key word is "Recycle"! Use your classic sermons however you can.—Fredrich Rest, New Braunfels, Texas.

## Effectively reducing stress

Here are ideas to make ministry more effective and less stressful:

1. If married, keep one's spouse ranked in priority above church work, second only to a relationship with Jesus.

2. Empower team leaders to avoid over-dependency on the pastor by not chairing or attending every meeting.

3. Get an annual mental health checkup from a professional, and call Ministry Care Line professionals whenever small issues feel draining.

4. Recognize that some churches become so dysfunctional that they should be disbanded for the good of everyone involved. It's also true that dysfunctional pastors have no business in leadership until the dysfunction is taken care of professionally.

It's essential that pastors become proactive in caring for their own needs and those of their

families. If they don't, no one else will!—Carole Kilcher, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

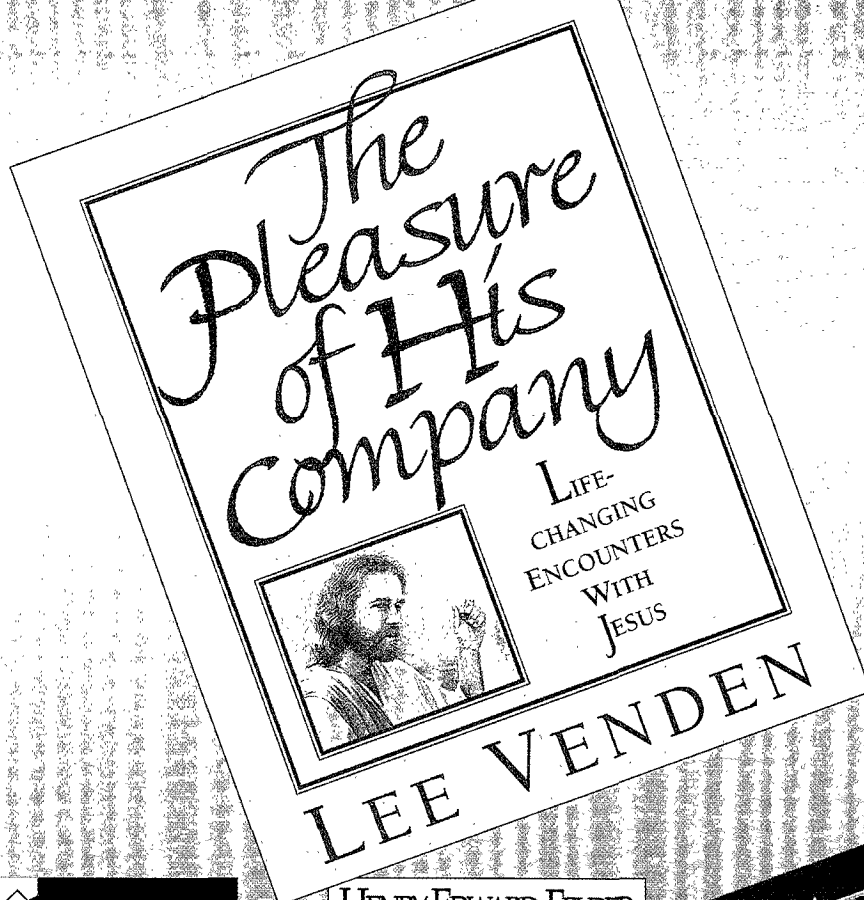
## SDA Periodical Index

Many sermon illustrations and other needed items are in denominational periodicals. Find them quickly with the *Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index*. The 36 journals indexed include: *Adventist Review*, *Ministry*, *Liberty*, *Guide*, *Mission*, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, *Celebration*, *Insight*, and several overseas division publications and all U.S. and Canadian conference periodicals. Cost is \$20 for each volume covering one year. Order the 1993 *Index* from: Daniel J. Drazen, editor, *SDA Periodical Index*, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104.

## \$25 for your ideas

Please send us a suggestion about how pastors can make their ministry more effective or less stressful. If we publish it, we will send you \$25. If your idea promotes a product or service you are selling, we'll be glad to consider it for publication but won't pay you \$25! Send ideas to *Ministry*, Shop Talk Editor, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. U.S. citizens, please include Social Security number.

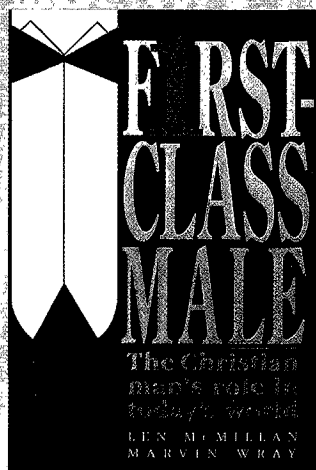
**Bible credits:** Texts credited to NEB are from *The New English Bible*. © The Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press 1961, 1970. Reprinted by permission. Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Texts credited to NKJV are from *The New King James Version*. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers. Verses marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill. Used by permission. Bible texts credited to RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.



## The Pleasure of His Company

Open this book, and you'll be swept through the centuries into the very presence of Jesus. Suddenly you're part of the crowd, pondering His words, rejoicing at His miracles, drinking in His love. *The Pleasure of His Company* makes the old, old story sparkle with new life. And here in Christ's company you too will find renewal. By Lee Venden. Features beautiful drawings of Christ by Darrel Tank. Paper, 112 pages.

**US\$8.95**, Cdn\$12.95.



### First-Class Male

In this entertaining and helpful look at what it means to be a Christian man in the nineties Len McMillan and Marvin Wray address concerns they hear expressed in their seminar for men. Topics include: balancing work, family, church, and self; solutions to midlife crisis; God's plan for men; relating to the opposite sex; burnout and stress; understanding male sexuality; and getting in touch with your emotions. Paper, 160 pages.

**US\$9.95**, Cdn\$14.40.



### Making Ends Meet

Should the Christian family buy a house or rent one? Should the slightly old car be traded in for a more reliable but much more costly new car? What about debt? life insurance? savings? Based on biblical principles, and filled with specific how-to information and work sheets, *Making Ends Meet* will help you manage your family finances in accordance with God's will. By Henry Edward Felder. Paper, 192 pages.

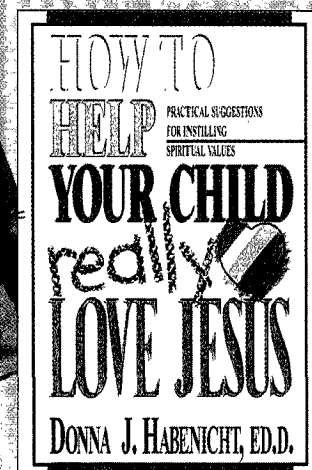
**US\$10.95**, Cdn\$15.85.



### ParentTeen

Family life specialist Dr. Len McMillan helps you prepare teens to live happy, Christ-centered lives. Contains sound advice on how to bond with teens, how to help them make good decisions and choose Christian values, and how you can give them a glimpse into God's love and bring out their very best qualities. Paper, 124 pages.

**US\$8.95**, Cdn\$12.95.



### How to Help Your Child Really Love Jesus

Here are hundreds of practical ideas from child development specialist Donna J. Habenicht for helping your child grow spiritually. Special features include faith development tasks for early and late childhood, a spiritual development chart, and Sabbath and worship activities appropriate for different ages. Paper, 224 pages.

**US\$11.95**, Cdn\$17.30.



These Review and Herald books are available at your ABC. Call **1-800-765-6955**.

Note: Canadian prices do not include GST and may change according to currency fluctuation.